

“I WON’T THINK ABOUT IT THE SAME WAY AGAIN”: CRITICAL LITERACY  
AS AN ANTI-BULLYING TOOL IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL SETTING

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Amber Lynn Reed

“I WON’T THINK ABOUT IT THE SAME WAY AGAIN”: CRITICAL LITERACY  
AS AN ANTI-BULLYING STRATEGY IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL SETTING

This qualitative study explored bullying through a critical lens in a seventh grade classroom located in a midsize Midwestern public middle school.

Data were collected in a Communications class during the last rotation of the academic year. Data collected included: field notes, student writing, videotapes of classroom discussion, videotaped peer interactions, videotaped presentations, audiotapes of interviews with the teacher, administrators, and school counselor.

This research integrated bullying and critical literacy theoretical frameworks in order to focus on the following research questions:

1. How will a teacher-directed bullying unit utilizing critical literacy practices impact a middle school seventh grade class?
2. How will a student-directed social action project on bullying, developed and implemented by middle school students, impact those who developed the project and the selected audience?
3. To what extent will the combination of critical literacy practices addressing the issue of bullying work as an anti-bully strategy?

Glaser (1992) and Strauss and Corbin's (1990) constant comparative analysis and Gee's (1999) critical discourse analysis are used to analyze the data collected. By analyzing the data for reoccurring themes, assertions were developed. Assertions reveal the positive impact combining critical literacy and bullying frameworks had on students gaining new information about the complexity of bullying, transferring their personal experiences into motivation for action, initiating responsibility for their own learning, and a desire to raise awareness through social action in their school environment. The social action project created space for student input and reflection to evaluate their actions. The combination of bullying and critical literacy practices provides a framework for future studies exploring bullying behaviors in school settings.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction to the Study

Walking into MC Middle School for the first time, I made my way through the crowd of students in the hall during the passing period and reached the main office. As I was waiting for Mr. Hall, the principal, to meet with me for the interview I had scheduled, I noticed two students with somber expressions waiting as well. They were first in line when Mr. Hall came to the foyer of the office. These two boys had been fighting and, from the conversation, I knew it wasn't the first time. They were handed passes back to class to inform their teachers they would be spending the rest of the day within in-school suspension.

During the passing periods I traveled through the halls at MC Middle School I met each teacher outside their classroom door standing in the middle of the hallway during the passing periods like stoplights monitoring the traffic's ebb and flow. They quickly become patrol officers as collisions occurred in the midst of the hustle and bustle of moving students.

One day in particular I was grateful for their monitoring and reaction time. I found myself unfortunately walking between a girl who was shouting obscenities from behind me to a boy a few people ahead of me. Quicker than I was able to react to get out of the way, the boy in front of me stopped and turned around to shout back when suddenly the girl accelerated and threw a punch. Two teachers were immediately present and restrained both students before any punches were able to make contact.

The example illustrates what we normally think of when we hear the word “bullying.” They exemplify the common view of bullying, which is imposing bodily harm to another individual purposefully (Olweus, 1993). However, bullying goes beyond the punch, slap, and kick. First, bullying begins before the physical aggression occurs. I wanted to explore what issues of power, equity, and identity in conjunction with adolescent development impact the social structure before a physical act is manifested. Second, the definition of bullying is expanding and becoming increasingly sophisticated, particularly with advancements in technology. I wanted to find out how open we are to expand our understanding and explore possible proactive measures versus reactive discipline.

Critical literacy was a key method for this study in helping me think about how to explore bullying beyond common perceptions and dive into issues of power, equity, tolerance, and justice that play a key role in bullying behaviors. I knew through conversations with the Mr. Hall, principal of MC Middle School, and Mrs. Ives, host classroom teacher for this dissertation, that viewing bullying and designing the curriculum through a critical lens would be a new way of learning for students and adults.

Prior to this study, *Too Good for Violence* (<http://www.mendezfoundation.com>), previously named *Peaceable Place*, was the only anti-bullying lessons taught formally at the school. While this curriculum does contain two to three lessons on bullying in the context of the violence umbrella the curriculum is built around, it does not claim to be an anti-bullying program. Teachers at MC Middle School are required to work through the *Too Good for Violence* curriculum as they see fit during their homeroom period. Mr. Hall reported that most teachers choose to do this over a two week period if not less.

They do multiple lessons per day and work hard to get through the material quickly.

Overall the curriculum has not been embraced by teachers and next year they will form a committee to reevaluate the use and adoption of this program. The students participating in this dissertation completed the *Too Good for Violence* lessons at the beginning of the school year. They did not have additional lessons or formal interventions regarding bullying between that time and the end of the school year when my data collection began. Conferring with Mrs. Smith, I designed 19 lessons (see Appendix) giving students multiple opportunities to explore bullying through a critical lens. These lessons included analyzing short stories, films, guest speakers, and scenarios and gave students a variety of avenues for response including writing, role play, and discussion. The last 5 meeting times were set aside for students to design a social action project of their choosing for an audience they felt they could impact the most.

MC Middle School is located in a state which adopted anti-bullying legislation effective during this school year. Since the legislation is new, no state support in terms of funding or training had occurred at MC Middle School at the time of my data collection. I collected data during the last six weeks of the 2005-2006 school year. The legislation is broad and basically outlines that schools must have an anti-bullying plan that actively addresses and educates staff and students. As Mr. Hall explained, he believed MC Middle School was in compliance with this law via wording changes inserting the term “bullying” into their student handbook and by continuing the *Too Good for Violence* curriculum this year.

It was the disconnect in viewing the spirit of the anti-bullying legislation, school interpretation in implementing anti-bullying programming, and reviewing the literature

regarding bullying and exploring complex sociopolitical issues through a critical lens that inspired this study.

### *Rationale for the Study*

Bullying research has been thorough in defining the types and ramifications of bullying behaviors (Casey-Cannon, Hayward, & Gowen, 2001; Demaray & Malecki, 2003; Eisenberg, Newmark-Sztainer, & Perry, 2003; Espelage, 2002; Fast, Fanelli, & Salen, 2003; Pellegrini, 2002). Current research has explored the complexity and prevalence of school bullying (Olweus, 1993). Critical literacy research has examined the power and complexity of language (Christensen, 2000; Endres, 2002; Fairclough, 1995; Gee, 1999; Henkin, 2005; Lewison & Leland, 2002; Shor, 2006) and how exploring language through a critical lens can be an avenue to discuss complex social and political issues (Comber, Thomson, & Wells, 2001; Heffernan & Lewison, 2003; Leland & Harste, 2001; Vasquez, 2004).

Taking into consideration current research in both bullying and critical literacy, this study sought to build upon what is known by combining critical literacy principles to address the issue of bullying in a supportive way in an attempt to reach a new depth of understanding by focusing on a specific anti-bully method, soliciting and valuing student input by taking a bottom-up approach in curriculum development, addressing middle school as an adolescent niche, and building the curriculum to focus on a culminating social action project.

### *Statement of the Problem*

State legislation, administrators, teachers, and children agree that bullying behaviors are a problem in schools (Skiba, Peterson, Boone, Miller, Ritter, & Forde,

2001). There is also supportive literature that describes a high degree of need for anti-bullying measures within schools. However, current research lacks indepth case studies which focus on a particular strategy and the impact it has on students (Harris & Petrie, 2003; Levin, 2003). At the same time, a majority of anti-bullying strategies adopted by school systems are designed in a top-down fashion where adults impose regulations and strategies onto children with little or no student input (Harris & Petrie, 2003; Levin, 2003; Rodkin & Hodges, 2003).

Increased pressure of adolescence (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 1997) partnered with the focus on measurable improvement in academics, as outlined in No Child Left Behind, places students and educators in a quandary to find time within the school day to address the seriousness of bullying and social development in a rich meaningful way. In this study, I attempted to create a safe space for student voices to be heard, to give students time to contemplate their beliefs and understandings, and to give students the tools to make a difference.

### *Research Questions*

In pursuit of creating a safe space in a middle school classroom for students to discuss bullying and be given opportunities to initiate change in bullying behaviors in their school, I formed the following research questions:

1. How will a teacher-directed bullying unit utilizing critical literacy practices impact a middle school seventh grade class?
2. How will a student-directed social action project on bullying, developed and implemented by middle school students, impact the students who developed the project and the selected audience?

3. To what extent will the combination of critical literacy practices addressing the issue of bullying work as an anti-bully strategy?

These research questions helped to guide decisions in designing, implementing, and analyzing this qualitative study.

### *Theoretical Assumptions*

There are three theoretical assumptions I embraced when making decisions and designing this study. The following assumptions are underpinnings of who I am as a researcher.

*There are Multiple Literacies.* There are many ways to express knowledge beyond the traditional reading and writing definitions connected to printed text (Fairclough, 1995). I align with the view of literacy that values knowledge not only gained through this traditional means but that which is also gained in cultural and intertextual experiences. For example, multiple literacies may include the knowledge acquired through formal training or experiences in area such as dancing, painting, technology, gardening, etc. (Fairclough, 1995; Gee, 1999).

*Language is a Powerful Tool for Social Change.* Valuing voice and bringing the perspectives of marginalized voices to the forefront can be a powerful tool for social action seeking to bring change and justice (Endres, 2001; Friere, 1972; Gee, 1999; Heffernan & Lewison, 2003; Leland, Harste, Davis, Haas, McDaniel, Parsons, & Strawmyer, 2003; Lewison, Seely Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002; Vasquez, Muise, Adamson,



Heffernan, Chiola-Nakai, & Shear, 2003). Language reinforces and reconfigures cultural discourses (Fairclough, 1995; Gee, 1999).

*Children have the Capacity to Create and Implement Social Action.* I am inspired by current critical literacy research that provides opportunities for children to explore tough sociopolitical topics and then encourages children to take action (Christensen, 2000; Heffernan & Lewison, 2003; Leland, et al., 2003; Lewison, et al., 2002; Vasquez, et al., 2003). I subscribe to the philosophy that empowered children have the capacity to make informed choices and impact society.

### *Methodology*

Constant comparative analysis (Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and critical discourse analysis (Gee, 1999) were invaluable tools in analyzing student products, field notes, and dialogue captured on videotape. Utilizing constant comparative analysis, I was able to code and track themes in student products and field notes as they emerged and developed over time. It was also a method which provided a natural path for triangulation of data among multiple and same sources. Critical discourse analysis (Gee, 1999) allowed me to analyze dialogue in light of cultural models, social languages, situated practices, and situated identities present at a given point in time within a larger context or Discourse.

### *Overview of Chapters*

In this chapter, I have provided background information and an overview of this study. Chapter 2 details a review of the professional, research, and theoretical literature on bullying and critical literacy. This chapter also outlines how I combined bullying and

critical literacy practices that were then used to design and support this study. Chapter 3 fully outlines my study, design, methods, research decisions and data analysis. Information on the context, research process, and analytic methods is also included in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 outlines the results of data collection utilizing the first four combined framework components as a template: interrogating bullying by disrupting the everyday world, understanding bullying by analyzing power relationships, viewing bullying from multiple perspectives, and analyzing how bullying is portrayed in popular culture and media. Chapter 5 addresses the results of data collection for the fifth combined framework component: moving toward social action to combat bullying. This chapter includes the reporting on the social action project, the students who created it, and responses from the audience. Chapter 6 summarizes the findings by outlining assertions and limitations. It also includes discussions of implications for future research.

### *Significance*

This study is significant because it sought to demonstrate how middle school students can be positively impacted by a bullying unit conceptualized within a critical literacy framework. The group of seventh graders I worked with gained new information, connected and shared their personal experiences with bullying, and began to take responsibility in their community of learners as they sought to raise awareness among their peers about bullying.

In addition, this study found success in enabling students to design and implement a social action project addressing bullying behaviors. A majority of the students participating in the creation of the project were able to reflect and evaluate their own performance and the potential impact on their audience. The content presented in their

action project showed they were able to synthesize their newly gained information and apply it.

A key finding of this dissertation is the viability of combining critical literacy practices to address bullying issues in a way that has the potential to create safe spaces for students to challenge, negotiate, and voice their own opinions, beliefs, and feelings regarding bullying. Pedagogical implications challenge the common top-down anti-bullying strategies many schools adopt while focusing on the importance of student-centered classrooms where student voices and perspectives are valued and integrated into authentic learning situations.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### *Chapter Overview*

Bullying is an all too common problem in American public schools today. In fact, the most common location for bullying behavior to occur appears to be in the school setting (Casey-Cannon et al., 2001; Demaray & Malecki, 2003; Eisenberg et al., 2003; Espelage, 2002; Fast et al., 2003; Pellegrini, 2002). Bullying is often defined as a repeated aggressive act by an individual or group with intent to harm (Olweus, 1993). While Olweus' (1993) definition of bullying is commonly referenced in current bullying literature, there is room for expansion to define specific types of bullying and challenge whether students as individuals or groups view bullying behavior as intentional. Rather, do students just view their own bullying behaviors as “teasing” or “kidding around” versus “I meant to harm or damage my peer?”

Critical literacy can be a tool fostering conversations about bullying in P-16 settings. Teachers play an important part in bringing critical literacy practices to the classrooms. Current critical literacy research explains how it can be used to address tough social and political issues and common components of critical literacy practices, as well as, how critical literacy practices have been utilized with elementary and secondary students and how teachers facilitate critical literacy through environment and curriculum (Christensen, 2000; Heffernan & Lewison, 2003; Leland et al., 2003). However, there is a lack of research that focuses on middle school specific settings, case studies focusing on combining bullying and critical literacy frameworks, and case studies focusing on social action.

This study attempts to explore the topic of bullying through a critical literacy lens in order to provide an opportunity for middle school students to investigate bullying through a teacher-directed curriculum utilizing critical literacy practices. Further, this study seeks to find out what will happen when the teacher-directed unit moves into a student-directed social action project designed to address bullying issues in their school.

### *Bullying*

#### *Bullies, Bullies, Everywhere*

Bullies can seem to show up everywhere. As adults, we may come in contact with bullies in the workplace, on the golf course, or at the supermarket. For children, school can become a breeding ground for bullying behaviors. Perhaps if we can imagine what it is like to be in middle school again, we may remember watching a bully picking on someone, maybe even picking on us....maybe even we were the bullies.

Whether in the cafeteria, the hallway, playground, bus, or classroom approximately 81% of males and 72% of females who are school-age report having been bullied (Casey-Cannon et al., 2001). Middle school age students report even higher levels of victimization (Casey-Cannon et al., 2001). Although researchers are making strides in identifying interventions and prevention strategies for counteracting and reducing bullying behaviors, there is still much room for further research in the field (Casey-Cannon et al., 2001; Demaray & Malecki, 2003; Eisenberg et al., 2003; Espelage, 2002; Fast et al., 2003; Pellegrini, 2002).

### *Types of Bullying*

This section will address types of bullies and the teacher's role in bullying issues. Bullying is defined as physical, verbal, social/relational, reactive, or sexual attacks meant to cause harm (Beale, 2001; Casey-Cannon et al., 2001; Demaray & Malecki, 2003; Pellegrini, 2002). Because bullying among school-age children is most likely to occur at school, it is essential for school personnel to be aware of and understand the nature and extent of bullying behaviors in their school setting (Casey-Cannon et al., 2001).

*Physical bullies.* According to Beale (2001), physical bullies kick, hit, take or damage property. They are considered the least sophisticated bullies because they are overt in their methods. They are usually found out quickly among peers and school personnel and tend to become increasingly aggressive as they age (Beale, 2001). The cliché physical bully is the student beating up kids unless they give them their milk money. Physical bullies have recently been caught on school videotapes as in the case of Chester Gala. Chester, an advanced student only ten years old attending middle school, was physically attacked by two classmates on June 19, 2006 while riding the bus home from school. The entire incident was caught by school surveillance cameras (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/13422602>).

*Verbal bullies.* Beale (2001) found verbal bullies, on the other hand, using language to hurt or degrade others. Name calling (personal insults, racial slurs, and teasing to torment) are the most common methods used. This type of bullying is the easiest to impose and the most difficult to identify since there is often no evidence and no physical scars are present (Beale, 2001). Casey-Cannon et al. (2001) explained a serious risk with this type of bullying is that it is often dismissed by adults, even when identified.

It is chalked up to typical adolescent behavior, leaving the bullying issues unaddressed. A verbal bully, for example, might pick out a physical trait such as a student's weight. The bully would then repeatedly insult that student with derogatory comments about his or her weight.

*Social bullies.* Beale (2001) and Espelage (2002) defined social bullies, also referred to as relational bullies, as strong members of a peer group who persuade their peers to reject a person or group of people, therefore cutting off their victim from social interactions. Simmons (2002) further explained how this type of bullying is committed by girls more frequently than boys and can include the spreading of rumors. Usually the excluded person or persons have been a part of the core peer group at one time and have, for some reason, lost favor with the peer group (Simmons, 2002). This is especially distressing to children or adolescents as they attempt to build foundational social connections that have potential long-term implications on self-esteem and self-worth (Wiseman, 2002). An example of this type of bully may include what might happen if a group of seven girlfriends try out for cheerleading and only six make the squad. This leaves one girl "out" which may cause tension and eventually lead to the split of the friendships. While this example may occur due to the structure of the number of persons allowed on a team or squad (an outside divisor), divisions can occur within the group itself (Simmons, 2002). For example, one girl may perceive a second girl in the group as flirting with a boy the first girl likes. The first girl may use invitations to social events, time spent on the phone, or lunch room seating arrangements to send messages within the group that the second girl is no longer in favor with her, leaving the second girl isolated.

*Reactive bullies.* Beale (2001) and Demaray and Malecki (2003) have found reactive bullies or bully/victims commonly crossing the divide between bully and victim. Although they can appear to be a clear victim of bullies at first glance, reactive bullies often instigate, tease, and taunt bullies (Beale, 2001). They begin by retaliating against bullies using self-defense as an excuse, but then often go on to bully others (Smokowski & Holland Kopasz, 2005). Therefore, they often are difficult to identify, physically aggressive, and quick to act (Beale, 2001; Smokowski & Holland Kopasz, 2005). For example, a boy repeatedly bullies another boy during gym class. So the boy who is the target of the bullying begins to fight back by pushing back once he's been pushed. In reactive bullying, the self-defense displayed by the target then crosses the line as instigator. Perhaps the same target purposely trips the bully during the next class period during a game even though the bully did not initiate bullying during that period.

*Sexual bullies.* Pellegrini's (2002) research explains how sexual bullying behaviors often start out as role development and exploration during student growth in interest toward the opposite sex. However, left unchecked these usually become serious sexual harassment behaviors which include unwelcome and repeated physical or verbal assaults (Pellegrini, 2002). An example of physical bullying may include snapping a girl's bra strap or brushing up against someone else in a sexual manner. An example of verbal assault may be calling someone derogatory names regarding their sexual orientation.

*Cyberbullies.* As technology continues to advance, bullying behaviors make their way into new media and realms. 'Cyberbullies' (Keith & Martin, 2005) infiltrate verbal and relational bullying into email, text messages, websites, etc. Technology also can



allow the bullies to shield their identity, while allowing for a fast flow of information that disseminates their agenda quickly and in mass (<http://www.stopbullyingnow.harsa.gov/>). New areas of research are just beginning to look at this new form of bullying taking place in a technological venue (Keith & Martin, 2005). Referring back to the example given in the verbal bully portion, the same bully who made degrading comments regarding another student can now send those messages or photos in mass to peers with little chance of negative consequences.

Understanding types of bullying is an important element of my research. Teachers need to be aware of the different types in order to identify and support students who are victims of bullies. Teachers and administrators also need to be able to identify a variety of bullying behaviors in order to create effective anti-bullying policies and programs. My study included interviews by the participating teachers and administrators regarding their knowledge of the range of bullying behaviors and what policies and programs are currently in place to support an anti-bully environment for students.

### *Teachers' Role in Bullying Issues*

Teachers play a vital role in creating the school environment, responding to bullies, and aiding bully victims (Orpinas et al., 2003). While teachers note the importance of the acquisition of bully response and victim aid skills, teacher education programs typically do not explicitly inform or train future teachers regarding bullying issues (Nicolaides, Toda, Smith, 2002). In essence, dealing with bullies and victims comes through 'on the job' training. Indeed, Harris and Petrie (2003) tell us:

...there is a perception among some students that telling adults will not help, because their intervention is too little, not effective, and may cause the bullying to become worse. Generally, bullied children, as well as bystanders, do not report incidents of bullying, because they fear retaliation or are not sure if teachers and administrators in their schools are even interested in trying to stop bullying. Too often, teachers feel that bullying issues should be dealt with by the administration or by counselors. Other teachers express a desire to help reduce bullying incidents on their campuses but admit they do not really know how to do it. (p. 8)

Specifically, in a study conducted by Rigby and Bagshaw (2003), 7723 adolescent students were surveyed regarding teacher responses to bullying. The results showed 40% of students surveyed “believed that teachers were not usually interested in taking action to stop bullying” (p. 535). While there are hindrances in teacher communication with students concerning bullying issues, including the lack of bullying training in teacher education programs and student perceptions regarding teacher effectiveness in dealing with bully situations, there are also strategies that can be used to open the line of communication with students regarding bullying issues.

In a 2003 study by Dake, Price, Telljohann, and Funk, less than 1/3 of 700 teachers surveyed responded that they set aside class time to discuss bullying issues with students or include students in conversations about bullying issues. Further, 41.5% of teachers in the same study had not seriously considered setting aside time in the classroom for discussion about bullying (Dake et al., 2003).

My study will attempt to address the need for teachers to set aside classtime to open up safe spaces for students to share their feelings and bullying stories. This dissertation will attempt to have a teacher-created curriculum addressing bullying issues, ultimately giving students three to four opportunities per week over a six week period to discuss bullying and bully prevention during classtime.

### *Themes in Current Bullying Research*

This section will synthesize themes in current bullying research. Current research pertaining to bullying discusses the complexity of bullying, the presence of bullying behaviors at any age level, the ramifications of bullying, and anti-bullying programs in schools.

#### *Bullying is Complex*

Bullying behaviors are complex. Since Olweus' 1978 study of aggressive behavior in males, the operational definition of bullying has been the intent of an individual to do harm to another, often repeatedly. Earlier in this chapter, the discussion on types of bullying was an indicator to the way in which bullying behaviors have morphed into variations and expanded into new and disturbing behaviors.

However, bullying is not only complex by the variances of how bullying behaviors can be manifested, but bullying is also complex because of the roles individuals take on in bullying scenarios. The relationships between bullies, targets, allies, and bystanders (Christensen, 2000) often change with power shifts. Perpetrators are bullies who show aggression through behaviors described in the earlier section. Targets are the individual or group who are the focus of a perpetrator's actions. Bystanders are those who witness acts of bullying but do not act in support of the target.

Allies witness bullying behaviors and act on behalf of the target to support the target and diminish the power of the bully. Bystanders who become allies to a target can be an asset to that target (Christensen, 2000; Harris & Petrie, 2003; Levin, 2003). For example, the boy in the bathroom who sees another student being hit has a choice as a bystander. He can walk away and pretend as if he saw nothing, or he can take action in some way (befriending the student, telling a teacher). If he takes action, the boy becomes an ally, or an asset, to the target in combating bullying behaviors. However, by supporting the original target, the bystander may now become a target himself (Christensen, 2000; Harris & Petrie, 2003; Levin 2003). In other words, the boy who tells the teacher or befriends the victim may become picked on by the bully who now sees the ally to the original target as a threat or challenge. Unfortunately, given enough pressure and negative consequences, allies may shift to bystanders in order to avoid being bullied themselves (Christensen, 2000; Harris & Petrie, 2003; Levin 2003). As stated earlier, reactive bullies began as targets and turn their aggression back to the bully or to others they can have power over (Beale, 2001; Demaray & Malecki, 2003). A scenario might be a girl who is being called names at school, who returns the names back to the bully, or instead, may find someone with less social status, younger, etc. to use as a target for her name-calling in order to build her own self-esteem and social status.

Because bullying behaviors are complicated, my study did not seek to give students simple information. Instead, the teacher-directed curriculum unit asked students to grapple with complex bullying scenarios and authentic experiences which have multiple outcomes based on the perspectives and choices of individuals.

*Bullying behaviors in the school setting can occur at any age level*

Bullying behaviors in the school setting can occur at all age levels (Harris & Petrie, 2003). As early as preschool, bullying behaviors can begin to emerge (<http://www.montana.edu/wwwpb/pubs/mt200307.html>). However, research by Harris & Petrie (2003) explains it is during the elementary years when students are most likely to report bullying incidents to a teacher. Typically, bullying in the elementary school occurs most frequently on the playground and within the classroom (Harris & Petrie, 2003). Harris and Petrie (2003) report more boys identified as bullies than girls in the elementary level. Perhaps this is due in part to the lack of knowledge elementary students appear to have regarding the more expansive definitions of bullying. Elementary students often refer more frequently to “teasing” which they are less likely to define as bullying behaviors (Harris & Petrie, 2003). Most commonly, they identify physical bullying behaviors (Harris & Petrie, 2003).

In 1997, the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) described bullying behaviors in the middle school setting as confusing and difficult compounded by the physical, emotional, and psychological changes occurring in puberty. The AACAP (1997) pamphlet went on to report middle school bullies as usually retaining their popularity as they seek out victims who are perceived “different” or “weaker”. Often middle school bullies will rally peers to co-bully their victims. Bystanders feel powerless (AACAP, 1997). Therefore, the results are power shifts like those described in the earlier section regarding the complexity of bullying. It is when the power shifts continue to occur from ally to bystander (as previously explained) that students become detached and desensitized to bullying behaviors (AACAP, 1997).

Middle school victims feel a strong sense of isolation and have problems creating friendships, cutting them off from peer support (AACAP, 1997). Simmons (2002) described how bullying begins to take on more sophisticated methods as bullies manipulate through language and social relationships. Cross gender bullying is unusual as girls tend to gravitate toward verbal and relational bullying, and boys tend to remain physically aggressive (Simmons, 2002). Middle school boys report a high rate of retaliation or reaction bullying (Harris & Petrie, 2003).

In a survey study conducted by Harris and Petrie (2003), 350 high school students were asked about the reporting of bullying incidents. Their study found that “nearly twice as many girls as boys tell about being bullied; however, less than 20 percent of students tell anyone when they experience bullying or when they see it happening. When students do tell, they are most likely to tell their mother or a friend. However, less than 1 percent of high school students tell a teacher, counselor, or school administrator” (Harris & Petrie, 2003, p. 60). Wiseman (2002) explains how high school boys are equally as likely to bully through relational and verbal means as girls. Although boys still show a higher rate of physical bullying, physical aggression by girls is on the rise. Harris and Petrie (2003) and Smokowski and Holland Kopasz (2005) showed bullying in the high school setting happening during the class periods, in common recreational areas, in hallways, and on the way home. While high school victims still report feelings of isolation as a problem, high school bullies reported higher tendencies toward depression than victims (Harris & Petrie, 2003).

While this bullying research demonstrates that bullying can occur at any age level, in this research I concentrated on the middle school bullying experience. I focused my research on seventh graders who are in a grade 6-8 middle school setting.

### *Ramifications of Bullying Behaviors*

Bullying behaviors may cause many short and long term negative consequences for the victim and the bully. In studies by Casey-Cannon et al. (2001) and Garbino and deLara (2003), physical implications of bullying are relatively obvious (abrasions, bruises, and death in extreme cases). Studies showed that other covert types of aggression, such as verbal bullying, have consequences as well. Victims of repeated aggression or bullying in any form can suffer from high absenteeism, poor academic performance, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, suicidal thoughts and anger issues (Smokowski & Holland Kopasz, 2005).

Dake et al. (2003), Harris and Petrie (2003), and Smokowski and Holland Kopasz (2005), ironically reported many of the social, academic, and emotional consequences are very similar for a bully and a victim. Without assistance these consequences for bullies can continue into adulthood where higher rates of criminalization and bullying behaviors continue through adulthood (Smokowski & Holland Kopasz, 2005). For victims, long term consequences include a higher risk of mental disorders including schizophrenia and problems with maintaining healthy adult relationships with the opposite sex (Dake et al., 2003; Smokowski & Holland Kopasz, 2005).

In this section, I speak to the heart of my study. Students can be tormented by bullying behaviors at school. Their hurts are lasting and real. My dissertation is centered in addressing ways to provide students with a safe space to voice their experiences,

concerns, and issues regarding bullying. It is my hope that this research can give us new insight into bullying issues and provide us with information that may aid in diminishing bullying behaviors and, therefore, its consequences.

#### *Anti-Bully Programs in Schools*

A growing number of anti-bully strategies can be found in the current research. Many anti-bully programs implemented in schools are informal and used on an as-needed basis. For example, complaint boxes

(<http://www.cycnet.org/today2005/today050304.html>; <http://homepage.eircom.net/~justinmorahan/bullyingmethod.html>) are receptacles placed throughout a school building where reports of bullying can be made by students. Peer mediation and conflict resolution (<http://www.cruinstitute.org/>) and the use of behavioral contracts (<http://www.education-world.com>; <http://www.interventioncentral.org>; <http://www.stopbullyingnow.harsa.gov/>) usually involve school guidance counselors in assisting host teachers, parents, and students in taking ownership of their own bully behaviors and building accountability between one another. The use of anti-bully websites can help to educate students on the types and dangers of bullying behaviors (<http://www.stopbullyingnow.harsa.gov/>).

There are several avenues of development for formal anti-bullying programs that can be adopted schoolwide. Zero tolerance policies, pledges and contracts, disciplinary sanctions are current anti-bullying methodological trends from a discipline after-the-fact perspective. Curriculum development in character/moral education and conflict resolution training are examples of anti-bullying prevention methods created and adopted by school systems.



Zero tolerance policies are administrative decisions which create absolute boundaries with automatic penalties for bullying behaviors (<http://www.wcwonline.org/o-rr25-1c.html>). Penalties may include in-school or out-of-school suspension or expulsion (Harris & Petrie, 2003; Smokowski & Holland Kopasz, 2005). Usually principals administer the policy consequences. According to middle school principal, Hogan (2004), due to the rigid parameters and consequences of zero tolerance policies, there is a burden of proof element in order to carry out the policy. For example, eye witness accounts, cuts or bruises present are evidence of some aggression or altercation. This burden of proof creates some limitations with the zero tolerance policies. Referring to the earlier discussion concerning types of bullies, physical bullies are only one of several types. Verbal and relational bullies may not produce physical evidence to present to an administrator, resulting in a “he said, she said” situation (Hogan, 2004). Decisions must then be made to administer a consequence to the one who is most convincing, administer an encompassing consequence to all participants, or dispense no consequences at all (Hogan, 2004). Chamberlain (2003) pointed out how issues of equity also arise in zero-tolerance policies where “knee-jerk reactions” by school administrators serve as a means to push kids out of school instead of providing a teachable moment.

Further, Harris and Petrie (2003) discussed a range of disciplinary sanctions which may be connected to zero tolerance policies or may be independent policies and may contain milder consequences that could be carried out by a teacher, to severe consequences carried out by administrators. Mild sanctions may include a loss of privileges, for example, missing a field trip (Harris & Petrie, 2003). Severe sanctions are

reserved for extreme violent behaviors, for example, bringing a weapon to school. Examples of severe sanctions may include an alternative school classroom, in-school or out-of school suspension, and expulsion (Harris & Petrie, 2003). Expulsion is generally the “last resort” sanction and used only when all other avenues have been exhausted and failed (Smokowski & Holland Kopasz, 2005).

According to the Indiana Education Policy Center (Skiba, Peterson, Boone, Miller, Ritter, & Forde, 2001), zero tolerance and suspension/expulsion sanctions lack effectiveness. The result of zero tolerance policies is typically removal of the student either temporarily by suspension or permanently through expulsion:

The message of zero tolerance is politically appealing, giving parents and communities the perception that schools are being tough on crime. While there are undoubtedly situations in which removing a child from school is necessary for that child or others’ safety, at present we have no evidence that punishment and exclusion can in and of themselves solve problems of school violence, or teach students alternatives to violence. (p. 24)

The Indiana Education Policy Center report on Preventing School Violence (Skiba et al., 2001) offered alternatives to suspension and expulsion measures including: alternative schools and settings, student court, and some community service models. However, this report did not offer data or research results regarding the effectiveness of the alternative strategies.

Harris and Petrie (2003) described anti-bullying pledges and contracts which are created for students, teachers, administrators, and parents. Anti-bullying pledges and

contracts describe behavioral expectations and responsibilities of students in the school setting. Harris and Petrie (2003) explained:

The behavioral contract, an agreement between the school principal or the teacher and the misbehaving student, is a common strategy for elementary students. Generally, the contract is written in positive terms in which the bully agrees to refrain from bullying behavior over a predetermined time frame. The contract also specifies a reward for the student who produces a positive outcome. Providing students with rewards for prosocial behavior often will deter aggressive behavior.

Behavioral contracting can be used with victims also. For example, the bullied child could agree to ignore teasing or use other, carefully explained, appropriate responses. (p. 24)

Hogan (2004) described similar implementation issues arise as with zero tolerance policies when consequences are executed. While pledges and contracts take a bit more preventative approach to anti-bullying issues compared to zero tolerance policies, the emphasis of both is still what will the consequences be when bully behaviors occur. Thus, the burden of proof issue still exists in order to apply the consequences outlined in the contract or pledge.

While I was able to find samples of pledges, articles, and websites referring to the use of pledges, I was unable to find research that thoroughly investigated the effectiveness of anti-bullying contracts.

Anti-bullying curriculum can be used by schools as a prevention method. Anti-bullying curriculum is usually developed along one of two tracks: character and moral

education or conflict resolution (Harris & Petrie, 2003). Henkin (2005) and Levin (2003) discussed how character, or moral, education focuses on strengthening interpersonal skills. By stressing the importance of friendships, positive behaviors, and ethics, character education seeks to build sense of community among students. In character curriculum there is an emphasis on personal growth and development and becoming a responsible member of the community (Levin, 2003).

Conflict resolution and peer mediation training seeks to empower students by teaching communication and mediation skills (Johnson & Johnson, 1996). Harris and Petrie (2003) and Levin (2003) explained the goal of conflict resolution would be for students to defuse situations before bullying behaviors occur. In implementing conflict resolution on a school-wide scale, a few mature students received training in order to become peer-mediators or mentors. However, this method is usually still within the close supervision of a school counselor. The ultimate purpose of conflict resolution programs is to establish a nonviolent school climate where students are physically, emotionally, and academically safe (<http://www.cruinstitute.org/>).

In terms of the effectiveness of character curriculum and conflict resolution, the reports are rather divided. There seems to be a fairly equal distribution among early reports showing at least a small degree of effectiveness with these strategies (Bulach, 2002; Skiba et al., 2001). However, other research (Johnson & Johnson, 1996) and reports (Strutzenberger, 2003) are less flattering as they question the methodological framework of conflict resolution strategies. Some conceptual questions arise out of whether conflict resolution is an applicable strategy with bullying behaviors, when victims can be completely innocent in the situation. Since conflict resolution can imply

compromise and both parties having fault in the offense or dispute, Strutzenberger (2003) declared conflict resolution as an inappropriate anti-bullying tool.

The general lack of research and data collected regarding the effectiveness of specific anti-bullying strategies was a driving force in this dissertation. At this point in the current research, zero tolerance policies appear problematic in application, pledges and behavioral contract effectiveness is unable to be determined through the research reviewed, and research is divided concerning the effectiveness of character curriculum and conflict resolution. In my research I attempted to evaluate a specific anti-bullying approach utilizing critical literacy practices and evaluate the impact on participating students.

#### *What is Missing from the Current Bullying Research?*

Though we have a good foundation in understanding bullying, types of bullies, roles in bullying scenarios, consequences of, and anti-bullying programs implemented by school systems, there are some missing or underdeveloped areas in the current research on bullying. For example, research does not currently focus on specific anti-bullying methods, bullying prevention methods do not typically include student input, and bullying research is lacking a connection to critical literacy practices.

#### *The Need to Focus on Specific Anti-Bully Methods*

First, ironically, the frequently repeated strategies found in bullying prevention measures created by adults are not generally well supported or documented in research. A majority of bullying research focuses on the types of bullies, frequency of bullying behaviors and consequences of bullying. Research on the age range and ramifications of bullying is quickly growing (Eslea & Smith, 1998; Pateraki & Houndoumadi, 2001). Few

articles focus on researching specific anti-bullying methods which may show results for the repetition in suggested strategies given by adults (Harris & Petrie, 2003; Levin, 2003; <http://www.mentalhealth.org/publications/allubs/Ca-0043/default.asp>; <http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/teens/bullying.asp>; <http://www.stopbullyingnow.harsa.gov>).

One example of research focusing on developing a prevention model is The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, researched inside and outside of the United States, stemming from Olweus' original Norwegian research (The Brown University Child and Adolescent Behavior Letter, 2004). The Brown University Child and Adolescent Behavior Letter (2004) outlined the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program as it focused on intervention measures at three levels: school-wide, classroom-level, or individual-level interventions. The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program “attempts to restructure the existing school environment to reduce opportunities and rewards for bullying. School staff is largely responsible for introducing and implementing the program. Their efforts are directed toward improving peer relations and making the school a safe and positive place for students to learn and develop” (The Brown University Child and Adolescent Behavior Letter, 2004, p. 1). While the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program and variations of it have shown success in improving school climate pertaining to bullying issues (Eslea & Smith, 1998; Olweus, 1993), there is still a need for further research examining specific characteristics and tools of prevention programs that seek to reduce bullying.

### *Lack of Student Input*

Second, bullying prevention methods do not typically include student input. In the previously discussed methods in the current research section (zero tolerance policies, contracts and pledges, curriculum), the programs are traditionally designed by adults and imparted to students with little or no input from the student perspective (Dake et al., 2003; Rodkin & Hodges, 2003). A concern with such measures is how students react to adult-driven change with little of their own voice represented. Rodkin and Hodges (2003) explain how programs should account for a certain amount of resistance to the top-down authority instituted on students. Additionally, “children’s acceptance of adult-generated rules and prosocial traits (e.g., “I will not bully, I will include those usually left out”) may not reflect private internalization. Teachers need to work with knowledge of the peer ecologies of their classrooms to head off resistance or ridicule. The challenge is not trivial” (Rodkin & Hodges, 2003, p. 393).

Since most prevention methods are created and implemented by adults, the research is repetitive in nature on what strategies are useful in preventing bullying behaviors. Frequently repeated tactics include: walk away from a bully, tell an adult, laugh along, make good friends, avoid bullies and places where bullying occurs (Harris & Petrie, 2003; Levin, 2003; <http://www.mentalhealth.org/publications/allubs/Ca-0043/default.asp>; <http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/teens/bullying.asp>; <http://www.stopbullyingnow.harsa.gov/>).

### *Lack of Connection to Critical Literacy Practices*

In the next section, I discuss critical literacy at length, but it is important to mention here that bullying research is lacking a connection to critical literacy practices.

However, there are a few research articles that focused on critical literacy practices that included the topic of bullying. For example, Heffernan and Lewison (2003) facilitated a writer's workshop in a third grade class based on critical literacy practices explored through text. Through writing social narratives, students explored a variety of topics including differences and friendships. However, bullying became an overwhelming theme appearing in 19 of the 20 stories (Heffernan & Lewison, 2003). While bullying emerged as a topic of concern by the students in the Heffernan and Lewison (2003) study, it was not a planned focus.

Research focusing on bullying issues rarely includes the discussion of critical literacy practices. I have not been able to find a research piece primarily focusing on bullying which implements critical literacy practices. For example, Henkin (2005) focused on bullying. Critical literacy is emphasized as a tool for addressing bullying issues in school settings. However, a majority of the book contains lesson plans and a research review of what is known. It does not go so far as to implement the lessons or report data supporting the use of critical literacy practices. Therefore, a missing piece in current research is that there does not appear to be "bullying" focused research explicitly including critical literacy as a primary tool.

As stated in the current research section, this study focused on a specific anti-bullying method (implementation of critical literacy practices addressing bullying) and paid careful attention to data analysis in determining the impact on participating students. Since this type of research is lacking, this study may provide information regarding the effectiveness of critical literacy practices in combating bullying. Also, a major component of my study was providing an opportunity for students to design, create, and



implement a social action project of their choosing to an audience they selected regarding information about bullying they felt was important. While the curriculum unit is teacher-directed, how students synthesize and take action about what they have learned is very student-centered. Therefore, the student-directed action research project seeks to address the lack of student input in determining prevention methods often used in schools. Finally, critical literacy practices will serve as the foundation and framework for the creation of the teacher-directed curriculum unit. Since bullying research generally lacks a connection to critical literacy practices, this aspect of the dissertation will be an important bridge to connecting the bullying and critical literacy theoretical frameworks. A fuller explanation of the integration between the two frameworks is found later in this chapter.

### *Critical Literacy*

In this section I explain how language is a tool that shapes identities and society, and the role teachers play in utilizing critical literacy practices.

#### *Language, Language Everywhere*

Language is everywhere. Perhaps the most common understanding of “language” is printed words like those found in books or spoken words like those used in a conversation. While it is true that our environment affords many opportunities for printed and spoken language, the concept of language can be broadened to include many aspects of body language, actions, cultural understandings, (to name a few) as discourses are formed.

Language is used as a tool to shape our identities and society (Fairclough, 1995). The language we use, the language around us and the discourses language builds are

powerful in continually shaping and molding our lives (Faircough, 1995; Gee, 1999).

Shor (2006) suggested:

We are what we say and do. The way we speak and are spoken to help shape us into the people we become. Through words and other actions, we build ourselves in a world that is building us...this is where critical literacy begins, for questioning power relations, discourses, and identities in a world not yet finished, just, or humane. (p. 2)

Critical literacy is understood as “learning to read and write as part of the process of becoming conscious of one’s experience as historically constructed within specific power relations” (Anderson & Irvine, 1993, p.82).

Quoting Shor (2006) again:

Critical literacy challenges the status quo in an effort to discover alternative paths for self and social development. This kind of literacy—words rethinking world, self dissenting in society—connects the political and personal, the public and the private, the global and the local, the economic and the pedagogical for rethinking our lives and for promoting justice in place of inequity. (p. 3)

Endres (2002) explained how critical literacy is founded in the theories of Paulo Friere who perceived the learner-literacy relationship as cornerstone for dialogue and active participation in communication. Friere focused on literacy education as an integral role in overcoming oppression (Endres, 2002). Indeed, Friere believed that critical pedagogy brings tension of sociopolitical issues to the surface. In doing so, students have the opportunity to recognize and effectively work through social issues (Endres, 2002).

Critical literacy is an instructional approach that can provide a pathway for important conversations about tough social and political issues to be brought to light in P-16 classrooms. Through the implementation of critical literacy instructional practices, students and teachers can engage in meaningful discourse, allowing multiple perspectives to be heard, the status quo to be questioned, power relationships to be interrogated, and popular culture and media to be analyzed (Lewison & Leland, 2002). All these aspects potentially lead toward social action in pursuit of justice (Christensen, 2000; Lewison & Leland, 2002).

In this section I lay the foundation for the teacher-directed curriculum that will utilized critical literacy practices that was used in this research not only explored printed and spoken language the students produced during the unit, but also included (not exclusive of) paying close attention to the way in which students position themselves, social structures and patterns that exist or develop, analysis of the social action project.

#### *Teacher's Role in Critical Literacy Practices*

Educators are an essential part of the move toward critical exploration of text. Teachers who do not encourage critical literacy practices and who do not view literature through a critical lens themselves may not encourage students “to use language as a tool for interrogation and critiquing the difficult things that happen in the world around them” (Leland, et al., 2003). Heffernan and Lewison (2003) and Kamler (2000) explained that when confronted with such situations, students quickly learn that the adults in the classroom do not want to discuss topics that are unpleasant or painful. Students, therefore, respond by not selecting such topics that may be personal to their own creative writing or written responses to text (Hankins, 1998). Critical literacy allows students to

move from impersonal sterile responses to share their personal stories (Kamler, 2000). As teachers initiate discussion about tough issues and as students personalize and share with peers and teachers, open communication is encouraged and develops in the classroom (Henkin, 2005).

Hammerberg (2004) described how critical literacy practices can be applied to virtually any type of media, for example, print, film, music, drama. Some literature naturally lends itself well to critical literacy practices and some does not (Hammerberg, 2004). Recently, more media and literature are being produced which create a natural and often explicit path to utilizing critical literacy (Hammerberg, 2004). Topics of children's literature including death, poverty, and divorce allow students a forum to learn, expand, and adapt their current beliefs and understanding of social or political topics (Hammerberg, 2004). As the definition of literacy is expanded, critical literacy principles can be applied to a wide range of literacy media including oral, drama, or images (Hammerberg, 2004).

Hammerberg (2004) continued to explain that central to teachers facilitating critical literacy practices within the classroom is an acceptance of student voice and opinion. Teachers must create an open atmosphere where students feel safe to be honest. Teachers must remain open themselves (Hammerberg, 2004). The notion that text has fixed meaning that the reader must find (rather than meaning that the reader brings to it, or that of a third option which fused the two from a transactional perspective) can be a stumbling block that many educators face (Hammerberg, 2004). Students may search for the "right" answers or teachers may have rigid responses that are expected, resulting in a

discussion that is stifled. Hammerberg (2004) went on to say that when teachers open students to critical practices:

...characters, plots signs, and symbols of a text do not demand a singular interpretation, and they are not stuck in a singular meaning. Instead, they are open to many possible interpretation and meanings, and readers are assumed to be interactive participants in creating meanings relevant for a particular situation. The many possible interpretations and meanings come from choosing how to react and interact with the text (which textual aspects to pay attention to, identify with, or explore further), and children (all children) are seen as capable of seeking these connections. (p. 654)

Hankins (1998) described how children are exposed to disturbing, distressing situations and circumstances that challenge their intellectual capacities, their sense of justice, or right from wrong. These situations may occur at home, school, extra-curricular activities. Critical literacy is a vehicle to present information and generate ideas, discussion, and for students to use their own experiences reason through tough situations (Henkin, 2005). When adults believe that these distressing situations and circumstances are too difficult to talk about, this sends messages to children that they should not open up and discuss their personal issues. For example, children may think “Since no one ever talks about it, I guess I am the only one with this problem” or “My teacher doesn’t ever talk about this, so I guess I shouldn’t either at school.” The result is that difficult issues are not addressed and the ‘shared denial’ (Hankins, 1998) occurs. Issues are kept silent due to the belief that the issues should not be or cannot be discussed. Bullying research

tells us that shared denial is an unhealthy avenue for bullies, victims, and bystanders (AACAP, 1997). Students must discuss and work through bullying behaviors for physical and psychological reasons (AACAP, 1997). Critical literacy practices can be a pathway to break through the wall of shared denial and discuss any topic “even one that would cause tension. To make our curricula critical, we need to anchor them in the life space of learners. We need to create spaces where new voices—children’s voices as well as teachers’ voices—can be heard” (Leland et al., 2003, p. 8).

Since this research is based a teacher-directed curriculum utilizing critical literacy practices, it is essential to discuss the role of the teacher in implemented critical literacy practices, what pitfalls teachers can run into, and the importance of an open and safe environment for them to share in.

### *Themes in Current Critical Literacy Research*

Critical literacy is a growing field of research. Current critical literacy research provides us with important information including how it can be used as an avenue to discuss complex social and political issues and how it has been utilized with students in the elementary and secondary school settings, providing a framework of common environments and curriculum guiding students into critical literacy practices.

#### *Critical Literacy as an Avenue to Discuss Complex Social and Political Issues*

Critical literacy is an avenue to discuss complex social and political issues. Endres (2001) and Friere (1972) explained how critical literacy does not seek to distinguish tension, but to explore those tensions in order to question and analyze the concepts within a topic. Reading, writing, and dialogue should move individuals to social action in addressing social injustices (Friere, 1972). Kamler (2000) pointed out that

through the exploration of text, expressing themselves through writing, and dialogue with peers and teachers, students exploring critical literacy practices transfer the text into their own understanding. Students are able to explore sociopolitical topics as they relate to their own circumstances, emotions, and beliefs (Christensen, 2000).

Many studies have utilized critical literacy practices to discuss tough issues with students. Examples of social and political issues include divorce, death, race, and poverty (Comber et al., 2001; Heffernan & Lewison, 2003; Leland et al., 2003; Leland, Harste, Huber, 2005; Vasquez et al., 2003). An important point for teachers to remember when facilitating critical literacy practices in the classroom is that they are not promoting a cause (Comber et al., 2001). The practices or topics may not fully align “with children’s out of school lives but that similar opportunities may present themselves to explore why things are the way they are, if and when teachers are alert to children’s questions about changes—in everyday life, local communities and workplaces—that affect families.” (Comber et al., 2001, p. 455).

As explained in the earlier section, bullying can be a difficult topic for students to discuss. Since bullying behaviors are difficult and complex in social structure, it was assumed for this study critical literacy practices could provide a natural framework for the teacher-directed curriculum implemented in this study.

### *Common Components*

There are five common components of critical literacy practices 1) interrogating the everyday world, 2) questioning power relationships, 3) viewing from multiple perspectives, 4) analyzing popular culture and media, and 5) moving toward social action (Lewison & Leland, 2002).

*Disrupting the everyday world.* Interrogating the everyday world invites students to “analyze how language is socially situated, how it shapes identity, and how words, grammar, and cultural discourses work in terms of agency, passivity, and power...examines how cultural and historical influences have shaped aspects of life” (Lewison & Leland, 2002, p. 109) In a first grade critical literacy study by Leland et al. (2005), the teacher was able to disrupt the everyday commonplace discussions in her classroom through text which challenged student understanding of the world around them. Rural white children in a Midwestern community shared conversations, writing, and texts addressing race and diversity (Leland et al., 2005). The teacher encouraged her students to see beyond the “normal” assumptions of their community, to look beyond differences of children in a text, and question stereotypes associated with groups of people in society (Leland et al., 2005).

*Questioning power relationships.* Questioning power relationships “challenge the legitimacy of unequal power relations, question existing hierarchies, and examine social structures that keep power in the hands of a few” (Lewison & Leland, 2002, p. 109). From a theoretical perspective, language is a powerful means of reproducing dominant discourses (Fairclough, 1989; Janks, 2000). Texts which take on tough social and political issues empower students and encourage inquiry regarding the positioning of individuals in a situation or text and the implications of those positions (Christensen, 2000; Heffernan & Lewison, 2003; Lewison, et al., 2002).

*Viewing from multiple viewpoints and perspectives.* Students need to have opportunities to view texts and scenarios from multiple perspectives. Critical literacy practices encourage students to “stand in the shoes of others in order to understand



experiences and text not only from personal experience but also from the viewpoints of others. Individuals with a critical perspective consider various views concurrently as they seek to gain a richer and more complete understand of the issue at hand” (Lewison & Leland, 2002, p. 110). In the classroom researched by Leland et al. (2005), students began to view multiple perspectives through text to text connections. Students were able to analyze characters and scenarios intertextually. Additionally, students went on to personalize with text (Kamler, 2000) and hold conversations which acknowledged the feelings and viewpoints of others (Leland et al., 2005).

*Analyzing popular culture and media.* Analyzing popular culture and media is the fourth component of critical literacy practices. “Taking a critical stance involves examination of how social norms are communicated through the various arenas of popular culture and how identities are shaped by these experiences” (Lewison & Leland, 2002, p. 110). Vasquez (2003) explored messages in advertisement, toys, and environmental print with preschool students. Evans (2004) explored children as consumers as the impact popular culture has on the business industry, advertising, and consumption of beanie babies. Janks (2000) used modern media advertisements with adults to ask global questions concerning domination, access, and diversity.

*Moving toward social action promoting social justice.* The goal of critical literacy practices is to move students toward social action to promote social justice. Social action can take on a variety of modes including composing “narratives, counternarratives, letters, essays, reports, poems, commercials, posters, plays, and web pages” (Lewison & Leland, 2002, p. 110). In the Heffernan and Lewison research (2003) where students focused their attention on the topic of bullying, the social narratives the students wrote

became a way for them to explore the possibilities of social action in bullying scenarios. By the same token, children in the Leland et al. research (2005) generated alternative possibilities for resolving racial issues in a neighborhood as an exploration into social action. Through these examples, the emphasis of social action is not to “fix” the problem with the “right” answer, but to explore or act on injustices in a variety of ways to improve or move past the status quo (Christensen, 2000).

This study attempted to incorporate all five of the common critical literacy components into the teacher-directed curriculum addressing bullying. The components were addressed multiple times and in an integrated fashion. For example, a lesson focusing on multiple viewpoints may discuss how placement in power relationships change someone’s perspective and moves them toward social action.

#### *Critical Literacy in Elementary and Secondary Settings*

Critical literacy has been utilized with students in the elementary and secondary school settings. Most of the current research is designed in a qualitative manner, primarily in case study fashion. Here are a few examples:

Comber et al. (2001) researched students in a second-third split grade in a low-income Australian classroom. Children in the classroom used writings and drawings to explore critical literacy practices (Comber et al., 2001). This exploration led to expression of emotions, academic learning, and social action through the students’ writing as they wrote for real reasons (Comber et al., 2001). In the Comber et al. (2001) study, students focused on issues of poverty, environment, government policy, and development and how these issues impacted their community, neighborhood and families.

Leland et al. (2003) researched five teacher education interns as they infused critical literacy practices into their elementary and middle school placements. While reluctant at first to use texts which conveyed a critical edge concerning sociopolitical issues, through the research the student teachers became more empowered with the process as they witnessed their students personalizing with the text and grappling with issues of equity and power (Leland et al., 2003). The researches concluded that “critical literacy is not about giving children positions to take but about helping them understand the positions that they and others inevitably take. These generative experiences, and the identities and agencies they develop, are too important for children to miss” (Leland et al., 2003, p. 14).

Christensen (2000) began exploring critical literacy in the high school setting when she saw students reading and writing as a means of self-exploration. Her experiences with critical literacy follow in the steps of the Brazilian educator Paulo Friere (Friere & Macedo, 1987). His view of literacy practices was that learning how to read print is not enough. In order to be literate, one must be able to also “read,” or infer between the lines, and “read” beyond the lines and see the power and equity issues surrounding text imposed by individuals or society. Therefore, Christensen (2000) focused on using reading and writing as emancipatory acts as a way for students to “get at the social roots of alienation and despair—to help students use words as a passage into interrogating society...to move beyond sharing and describing pain to examining why they are in pain and figuring out how to stop it” (Christensen, 2000, p. VII).

Goodman (2003) took a different approach in the secondary setting to explore critical literacy practices. His research (Goodman, 2003) focused on using video

production and media to engage inner-city students. By interrogating and producing media, urban teenagers inspected the messages, issues, and possibilities that modern media perpetuates (Goodman, 2003). Goodman's (2003) experiences demonstrated alternative methods and content areas where critical literacy practices can be implemented with secondary students.

#### *What is Missing from the Research on Critical Literacy Practices*

Current research on critical literacy practices has informed us about discussing complex social and political issues with children in preschool through secondary school settings, utilizing common components of critical literacy practices, and creating space, environments, and curriculum through a critical lens. However, current research leaves us with some missing pieces for future research to be developed around. Middle school specific experiences, case studies of classrooms utilizing critical literacy practices focusing solely on bullying issues, and studies focusing on the impact of the students' social action are areas for further development.

#### *Lacking of Middle School Experiences Focusing on Critical Literacy*

Specific research concentrating on critical literacy practices implemented with middle school students is currently missing from the research. Current research has had case studies focusing on preschool (Vasquez, 2004), elementary (Comber et al., 2001; Heffernan & Lewison, 2003; Leland et al., 2005) and secondary schools (Christensen, 2000; Goodman, 2003). Leland et al. (2003) researched student teachers implementing critical literacy practices into the classroom. Student teaching placements included middle school settings, but did not focus on them exclusively (Leland et al., 2003).

Critical literacy practices would seem especially compatible with the middle school level because they offer students the opportunity to explore complex, abstract, sociopolitical topics which contain moral, ethical, and value elements (AACAP, 1997; Lewison & Leland, 2002). Developmentally, at the middle school stage, students are grappling with concepts of morality, ethics, and values (AACAP, 1997).

Critical literacy practices support the unique developmental stage of middle school children. The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (1997) reported the following characteristics of middle school students: 1) Middle school students often struggle with a sense of identity, changing relationships, sociopolitical awareness as they seek value systems, morals, and direction. However, it is also during this middle school period that students are most interested in the present and must be challenged to think about the future (AACAP, 1997). 2) Middle school students also have a greater capacity than earlier in their development to work physically, mentally, and emotionally. In addition, they are expanding their intellectual interests and have increasing capacity for abstract thought (AACAP, 1997). These characteristics of middle school development ready students at this age to reflect and engage in critical thought and action (AACAP, 1997). For example, students who are struggling with a sense of identity, change, and relationships may be ready to interrogate their everyday world. As middle school students explore different value systems, morals, and direction they may be more willing to question power relationships. The increased capacity for abstract thought may be pivotal in viewing issues from multiple perspectives. A greater capacity to work physically, mentally, and emotionally paired with expanding intellectual interests may serve as catalysts for social action. 3) While each child is an individual with unique

qualities and dispositions, the typical middle school student is searching for direction, identity, morals and values but more specifically with morals and values (AACAP, 1997). Middle school students typically test boundaries and many go through a phase of experimentation (AACAP, 1997). Pursuing the development of ideals as they seek out role models, value systems, and moral codes, middle schoolers are processing complex life situations and forming beliefs and behaviors that can last a lifetime (AACAP, 1997).

#### *Lacking Case Critical Literacy Units Focused on Bullying*

In current research, case studies utilizing critical literacy practices have been designed to address a variety of tough topics. However, case studies designed to specifically focus on bullying are missing from the current research. Some examples are as follows: Leland et al. (2005) explored topics including homelessness, race, gangs, and war in a first grade classroom. Heffernan and Lewison (2003) explored topics including economics, race, and bullying with third graders. Vasquez (2004) addressed topics including economics, gender, and environment with preschoolers. Christensen (2000) addressed topics including immigration, the politics of language, and identity with teenagers.

While current research demonstrates the success of critical literacy practices among a variety of topics, an indepth look at critical literacy practices focusing on one sociopolitical topic, bullying for example, is missing. Henkin (2005) argues the position for bullying to be addressed through literacy as she reviews the current research and need for future research in bullying. She also outlines lessons and strategies for confronting bullying through literacy. However, I was unable to find actual case studies designed and implemented combining bullying and critical literacy practices. Influenced by the need

for specific research in the middle school setting, I chose a middle school setting for this study.

*Lacking of Focus on the Impact of Social Action Component*

Most current case studies are designed and data reported via the five critical literacy components. Interrogating the everyday world, questioning power relationships, viewing from multiple perspectives and analyzing popular culture and media (Lewison & Leland, 2002) are important elements in their own right for students to move through. Critical literacy utilizes these four components to inspire students to move toward social action in pursuit of social justice (Lewison et al., 2002).

Taking action to promote social justice can be the culmination of critical literacy practices (Christensen, 2000). When children are able to interrogate the everyday world, question power relationships, view from multiple perspectives, and analyze popular culture and media, they can make informed choices through their own reflection and understanding which influences and transforms the world (Lewison & Leland, 2002).

Through social action, knowledge is power. Carini (2001) stated:

...there isn't any piece of knowledge or way of knowing that is altogether separable from a context of assumptions, purposes, and values. Even if unannounced or overlooked, these institutions of worth and importance spread an aura around even those hard bits of reality to which a particular discipline or social order accords the status of fact, and the rules and methods of investigation and theorizing that it acclaims. Taking the next step, by treating knowledge as a made thing, I place responsibility for knowledge squarely in human hands. The

status accorded to knowledge, who is given access to it, whose knowledge counts, whose way of knowing are privileged, maps a history of power. (p. 78)

Current research previously discussed including Comber, et al. (2001), Christensen (2000), Heffernan and Lewison (2003), Vasquez (2004), and Vasquez et al. (2003) all describe data collected demonstrating student movement through the critical literacy components including social action. Within the reporting of the social action element, some research (Heffernan & Lewison, 2003; Vasquez, 2004) has reported on the impact it has on the students conducting it. However, the current research does not expound on what impact the students' social action has on others. For example, a project where students might choose to present information to another class regarding a topic such as homelessness is not looked at in terms of how that information impacted the thoughts or actions of those listening to the presentation. Another example might be how posters hanging in hallways conveying information about race issues or equity impact the students or adults who view them.

Influenced by this, I designed this study to include a student-directed social action project where students would create a project of their choosing to implement with an audience they select. Further, data was not only collected from the students who designed and implemented the social action project but also from audience members.

### *Combining Bullying and Critical Literacy*

The combination of bullying addressed through a critical lens is a key element to this study. My study will attempt to address the missing elements of current research (outlined previously in this chapter) in an integrated fashion by using bullying as the tough social topic to aid research development of critical literacy practices, while at the



same time, using critical literacy practices to add to what we know about bullying. The combination of bullying and critical literacy may provide teachers with guidance in facilitating discourse about bullying. Teachers can use traditional text or a broader definition of text to include music lyrics, film, and art to serve as a foundation for discussion and move students toward sharing their personal experiences and perspectives. This section outlines the conceptual integration of the two frameworks.

### *Interrogating Bullying by Disrupting the Everyday World*

Interrogating bullying by disrupting the everyday world asks students to critically look at the social norms, practices, and discourses surrounding bullying issues in order to challenge and change negative implications of bullying (Christensen, 2000; Leland et al., 2003). For examples, a common misconception which is often perpetuated in society is that being bullied is a typical rite of passage to fit in with a group, club, athletics, or social class (<http://www.stopbullyingnow.harsa.gov/>). Since many students and adults may believe that such misconceptions are true, it is important for students to have opportunities to question status quo bullying messages in order to reflect on their own bully behaviors or bully behaviors displayed toward them (Henkin, 2005).

### *Understanding Bullying through Analyzing Power Relationships*

Bullying issues are issues of power (Christensen, 2000; Henkin, 2005). Who has the power? Who wants the power? How is power shifted through actions or circumstances? Christensen (2000), Harris and Petrie (2003), and Levin (2003) discuss the importance of going beyond the obvious power issues they face in the everyday world. Students need to grapple and spend time analyzing scenarios and their experiences (Henkin, 2003). For example, a student may quite easily identify who is the bully in a

given situation and how a bully's power is impacting a victim. However, students could be helped to move deeper into the conversation by determining what actions by the victim may shift power away from the bully in a positive way (i.e. getting assistance from an adult) versus a negative way (i.e. forms of retaliation).

### *Viewing Bullying from Multiple Viewpoints or Realities*

It is important for teachers to give plenty of opportunities for students to explore bullying issues from multiple perspectives (Henkin, 2005). Teachers need to use strategies that allow students to share their voices and perspectives in a non-threatening way (Christensen, 2000). By attempting to place themselves in the shoes of another person, hearing the voice of a peer, or viewing and interacting with their classmates, students can be encouraged to see bullying issues from multiple realities (Lewison & Leland, 2002). This is important since bullied students can often feel isolated, believe they are the only one, and bullies can become so focused on their target they lose sight of other perspectives (<http://www.stopbullyingnow.harsa.gov/>).

### *Analyzing How Bullying is Portrayed in Popular Culture and Media*

One avenue for students to gain multiple perspectives is through popular culture and media (Lewison & Leland, 2002). Recent "teen" films such as *Mean Girls* (Michaels & Waters, 2004) and *Napoleon Dynamite* (Coon & Hess, 2004) reflected the seriousness of bullying in adolescent life. The dominant antagonist in most films for children and adolescents is a bully, a person who purposely and repeatedly harms another physically or psychologically (Olweus, 1993). Therefore, films explicitly dealing with bullying behaviors are an excellent vehicle through which students can view the scenarios objectively. Then, through critical literacy teaching strategies, students can move toward

the personal by relating what they have viewed to their own experiences (Christensen, 2000; Henkin, 2005).

### *Moving Toward Social Action to Combat Bullying*

So far the strategies discussed have focused on student exploration and personalization of their own bullying experiences. Siris and Osterman (2004), Yoon (2004) and Levin (2003), described how teachers may gain important information and insight to the student world of bullying through facilitating activities encouraging personalization and exploration of bullying behaviors. This is an important step since teachers must first have knowledge of a topic before they can address it with informed decision making (Henkin, 2005). Yet, knowing about bullying from the student perspective and current literature is not enough. Rather, teachers must move students toward social action in order to begin to bring about social justice (Christensen, 2000).

### *What Further Research is Needed*

Current research on bullying and critical literacy has provided a firm foundation for future research. Expansion for future research includes focusing on combining critical literacy and bullying, focusing on student input in bullying prevention programs and practices, and emphasizing the middle school setting.

In this study, I combined the bullying and critical literacy frameworks, as outlined in an early section of this chapter, by working with a middle school teacher to implement a critical literacy unit pertaining to bullying. Even though the term “teacher-directed” is used in describing the bullying unit created for this study, it is important to emphasize the word “directed”. The unit was framed but remained flexible to change according to student needs as information is collected and analyzed. This intervention had the goal of

moving students toward taking action regarding bullying at their school. Students were given the opportunity to synthesize and use what they had learned to design, create, and implement a social action project with the purpose of combating bullying. The participating students needed to determine an appropriate audience for their project. Therefore, my study used critical literacy practices to examine bullying. Further, my research will focused on student input, as described earlier, not typically included in anti-bully programs. Finally, this research focused on middle school students.

Critical theory and grounded theory frame the methodologies selected in structuring the design and analysis of this study. The next chapter details the methods by which a deep qualitative analysis of the data was constructed.

## Chapter 3

### Research Decisions and Theoretical Perspectives of Methodology

In this chapter I explore two kinds of methodology that were used in analyzing data that combine bullying and critical literacy. Grounded theory and critical theory contain methods and principles that seem to be in line with exploring perspectives, power relationships, and social justice pertaining to bullying issues as students question and expand their own beliefs and experiences in an emergent way.

Anti-bullying legislation casts a broad net for schools to design and implement an anti-bullying program which is tailor made for their school systems or individual buildings. Too many anti-bullying programs and curricula are still narrowly designed by adults imposing adult perspectives on children's circumstances with little or no input from children themselves (Levinson & Levinson, 2005; Nudo, 2004; Snider & Borel, 2004; <http://www.montana.edu/wwwpb/pubs/mt200307.html>). In reviewing research about bullying, many articles or websites seemed to be action research, survey, or case study in nature were helpful in that they allowed us to further define or identify bullying behaviors (Beale, 2001; Keith & Martin, 2005; Nudo, 2004; Pateraki & Houndoumadi, 2001). However, they offer too little in terms of detailed explanations of the data analysis process or even describe the types of data that were collected prior to reporting their conclusions.

Rather than impose an anti-bullying program designed from an adult perspective, this study seeks to gain student input and perspective on the bullying behaviors and issues they manifest and come in contact with through the introduction of critical literacy practices. Through the opportunities to share their personal stories and experiences

openly and hear issues from their peers' perspective as well, this study opened the door for students to take social action by sharing their perspectives with others. Approaching this study from a qualitative stance, attention was given to data collection and analysis in order to support the research findings and make them clear to the reader and fill in some of the gaps left in previous research concerning anti-bullying programs.

Over the course of six weeks and 24 lessons, seventh grade students began by participating in teacher-directed lessons framed via critical literacy practices pertaining to bullying. Toward the end of the time, responsibility shifted from the teacher to the students, who then became participants in designing and implementing a social action project directed at a target population of their choosing.

Based on current critical literacy and bullying research and what are opportunities for further exploration in that research, this study was designed around the following research questions:

1. How will a teacher-directed bullying unit utilizing critical literacy practices impact a middle school seventh grade class?
2. How will a student-directed social action project on bullying, developed and implemented by middle school students, impact those who developed the project and the selected audience?
3. To what extent will the combination of critical literacy practices addressing the issue of bullying work as an anti-bully strategy?

### *The Study*

Two months prior to the beginning of my study I received human subject approval and made contact with the MC Middle School. At that time it was determined that I

would work with Mrs. Smith again since we had a good rapport and previous collaboration during my pilot study the year before. In the middle of March I began implementation of the bullying unit Mrs. Smith and I had outlined together. Daily outlines of the lessons are included in the Appendix. For the first seventeen class periods, students read literature, explored bullying scenarios, discussed responses to bullying, wrote forgiveness poems, were exposed to guest speakers, and viewed documentary and fiction films containing bullying information. Background building provided by the teacher during these first seventeen lessons included information on the types of bullying, social roles in bullying scenarios, and ramifications and implications of bullying behaviors.

At least two critical literacy principles were imbedded in each of the lessons and served as the overarching purpose for the activity. For example, the day the guest speaker came to share his experiences of being a target, the focus of the discussion following the presentation was centered on viewing from multiple perspectives by giving students the opportunity to see and hear what it is like to walk in someone else's shoes. Table 1 outlines the critical literacy principles represented in each lesson.

Table 1. *Matrix of critical literacy aspects represented in each lesson.*

Day	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
IEW	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
VMPP	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
QPR			X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

AP		X							X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
C																									
PS				X	X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
A																									

IEW=Interrogating the Everyday World  
VMP=Viewing from Multiple Perspectives  
QPR=Questioning Power Relationship

APC=Analyzing Popular Culture & Media  
PSA=Promoting Justice through Social Action

While my goal in designing the curriculum was to imbed at least two critical literacy principles in each lesson, Table 1 displays the tight integration of five commonly recognized principles. In 50% of the lessons, all five critical literacy principles were integrated and manifested through teacher directed materials, student input including student products, discussion, and student behaviors.

The last five class periods were focused on turning responsibility over to the students, having them design a social action project of their choosing and implement their project to a target audience. While Mrs. Smith and I were present and were a resource for materials and guidance, a majority of the time students worked in small groups on the tasks they had determined for themselves. On the last day of data collection, Mrs. Smith's students presented their social action project to their peers in another seventh grade class. In Chapter 5 I explained the details of the social action project.

Since the data collection for this study began on the second day of class, I thought it was best to have students become more acclimated with Mrs. Smith and for her to establish classroom procedures and boundaries in setting up the class for the six weeks. Therefore, I arrived during the lunch period and was set up prior to students entering the classroom. The teacher introduced me on the first day of data collection. Other than that introduction, I positioned myself in the back corner of the room most of the first three lessons, taking field notes regarding the students' discussions and interactions. Students



gradually began to say hello to me as they entered the room from lunch or passing them in the hallway or main office as I signed the visitor's log in and out of the building. After the first three lessons, I began to circulate throughout the room along with the teacher as students were working in small group or individual projects. Students would sometimes ask questions. The students seemed comfortable with my presence as I learned their names and slowly immersed myself into their classroom. On the seventh teaching day I taught my first lesson with the students. They were very welcoming as they responded to questions and discussion prompts. The remainder of the six week period the teacher and I shared the teaching responsibility. On the days I taught, I would view the videotapes to write my field notes. Finally, as students began the design portion of the social action project, I took the lead role with the students in guiding them through the process. I found the students to be very consistent in behavior, responses, and work product between Mrs. Smith and myself in all the transitions made during my time working with them.

#### *Coming to the Study*

I taught elementary school for six years in the county where my study takes place. Teachers within the community were very close and I was given several opportunities to collaborate with teachers outside of my own school district. My final year teaching within a K-12 school system, I worked as the curriculum coordinator for the school system I was teaching at. This provided opportunities to build professional relationships with school administrators in my community. Upon my professional move to the university setting, I have been able to utilize the relationships fostered from my teaching and curriculum coordinator experiences to maintain and grow strong professional connections in the community. While working with MC Middle School on a separate project, the principal

began to ask me about my doctoral work and was interested in the topic and concept, so much so, that he extended the invitation for me to implement my dissertation in his school.

In the fall 2004 school semester, I worked with Mrs. Smith during my pilot study for this dissertation. Mrs. Smith is a middle school Spanish teacher who is also responsible for a seventh grade Communication class. Mrs. Smith is a middle-aged woman with a pleasant but strong professional demeanor. She came into the teaching profession at a nontraditional age and has been teaching eight years. She dresses in a professional manner and has good classroom control while still maintaining a positive rapport with students. During passing periods she is present in the hallways where she works to maintain order and continues to build relationships with students. Recently Mrs. Smith finished her administrative license and frequently works as the ‘lead’ teacher in place of the principal when he is out of the building. This gives her an interesting perspective on the bullying climate and problems in the school from both a classroom teacher and administrative view. Mrs. Smith has an outgoing personality. Her peers gravitate toward her for assistance. On several occasions when I was in the school, she was engaged in advising and assisting teachers with a range of issues. Currently she is enrolled in an Educational Leadership doctoral program where she is working toward her superintendent credentials. Mrs. Smith is supportive and open to research in her classroom and values the role of research both as a teacher altering instruction but also through the eyes of a doctoral student who is learning to conduct her own research. After we collaborated on the pilot for this dissertation, she quickly offered her classroom for

the dissertation itself. I was very fortunate to have Mrs. Smith, with such a range and depth of perspectives and experiences, as a host teacher for this research.

### *The Teacher*

When I worked with Mrs. Smith the year before during the smaller pilot study for this dissertation, Mrs. Smith had been very accepting of the research I conducted in her classroom. She was also very eager to give feedback and spent a lot of time talking about the process and products students were creating.

During this research experience, Mrs. Smith was equally accommodating. Mrs. Smith and I debriefed after each lesson. She would give me her immediate impressions. Mrs. Smith's lunch break was prior to the class period I was working in. Often I would go in early and spend time discussing the previous lesson in more depth or the fleshing out the direction of future lessons. She offered valuable insights about individual students concerning responses or behaviors that would arise during the class periods. Mrs. Smith was very hospitable in offering materials and resources available at the school, organizing schedules and times when students asked for release time from study hall to work on the social action project, and making herself available to answer my questions via email, phone, or in person.

During the first two weeks when I was observing in the classroom, I gave Mrs. Smith the outlines for the lessons she would teach. While she followed the outlines, she also had a good sense for discussion and was able to improvise questions and lines of discussion that filled in gaps and followed the students' interest. As I began to move into a co-instructors role for the curriculum, Mrs. Smith was always present. Even though I was videotaping the lessons for my own viewing and reflection at a later time, Mrs.

Smith remained invested and observed the lessons, interjected information, continued to help facilitate grouping activities. During the social action project, she worked to gather materials, assisted students with the school technology, and monitored student behaviors since students were often in small groups in various places within the school building (i.e. the library, hallway, auditorium, etc.).

Mrs. Smith did not limit the curriculum in any way. She was supportive to topics and aspects of bullying that the students desired to pursue and that I would initiate. For example, she was comfortable with discussion concerning bullying regarding sexual orientation and teachers as bullies. Our relationship was very open in communication. She was honest in her feedback. At one point in the middle of data collection, I had planned on using a chapter book in a fairly traditional manner compared to the other lessons that had already been implemented. The first day did not go well. Students were not engaged, there was no discussion, a few students asked and wondered if we could do other activities we had done on previous days. After the first day I was a little confused in how to continue with the plan I had laid out for the next four days. When I approached Mrs. Smith about the situation, she very bluntly suggested I scrap the next four days and return to the roots of the project. I took her advice and I believe it ended up to the right decision. I am grateful to have had the relationship built over both the pilot and this study where Mrs. Smith felt she could be honest and provide encouragement when things went well and advice when things did not.

### *The Students*

The students selected to be included in research were in the last rotation of seventh grade Communications in Mrs. Smith's classroom. Some of the students were

also enrolled in Mrs. Smith's Spanish class during other periods of the day. Most of the students were familiar with Mrs. Smith as sixth graders in her Spanish, Communications, Student Resource period or other extra curricular activities and duty she was responsible for. Sixteen students returned consent forms giving permission for their participation for data collection including videotaping. The administration and Mrs. Smith decided the remaining students would move through the lessons, since it was deemed the course curriculum, but no data was reported regarding the students not returning a consent form.

Sixteen seventh graders, six boys and ten girls, at MCMS participated in this study. Prior to the implementation of the lessons associated with this study, the students were given a survey regarding bullying at their school (see Data Sources section of this chapter). This information gave me insight into the perspectives and background of the students. Of the sixteen participating students, 24% were African American, 11% were Hispanic, 64% were white, and 1% identified as other or marked multiple columns. Fourteen students were English as a First Language (EFL) speakers. Two were English as a second language with Spanish as their first language. Since Mrs. Smith is also the Spanish teacher, any confusion regarding directions or discussion points was able to be clarified in the students' primary language. Student socioeconomic status will be discussed in the following section regarding the school.

Ten of the students stated that they have been bullied at least once a month during the school year. Five stated that they have been bullied at least once per week. Only one student reported never being bullied within the school year. The most frequent bullying behaviors, where more than 50% of the students reported as frequent, were: teasing,

hurtful name calling, being left out on purpose, rumor spreading, and sexual harassment. Four students admitted staying home from school because of bullying.

Students were asked about their feelings after being bullied. One student reported feeling sad and miserable, nine reported being angry, seven reported that it does not really bother them. No students reported never being bullied.

When asked if administrators at MCMS are interested in trying to stop bullying, the results were fairly evenly distributed along the spectrum with a slight lean in the affirmative. Three students felt administration was never interested, four felt the administration was sometimes interested, four felt the administration was usually interested and six felt the administration was always interested.

Similar responses were obtained when students were asked if teachers at the school are interested in trying to stop bullying. Three students responded never, five responded sometimes, six responded usually, and three responded always.

### *The School*

MC Middle School is located in a mid-size Midwestern city and includes 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. According to this state's Department of Education, 402 students were enrolled at MC Middle School for the 2005-2006 academic year. Of the 402 students, 70% were white, 18% African American, 3% Hispanic, 2% Asian, and 7% multiracial. Thirty-four percent of students qualified for free and reduced lunch. MC Middle School maintains a community school feeling since many students walk and ride bikes, as well as, ride the bus to school. The school is nestled amongst small strip malls, fast food restaurants, banks, and has a local branch firestation in the school's backyard. Several housing subdivisions feed students into the school, as well as government subsidized

apartment complexes and a housing subdivision consisting mostly of rental homes. This accounts for the large range in socioeconomic status represented in the student body.

Academically, MC Middle School has met or exceeded state averages on standard test scores in language and math for the past six years. The school operates on a traditional schedule with one set of rotating courses that change every six weeks. These include classes such as art, physical education, Communications, and music. Grading periods are on a six week rotation. Teachers work in grade level teams with one teacher acting as grade level leader.

The main office, located just inside the main entrance, and cafeteria, located across the hall from Mrs. Smith's room, are all constructed with glass walls for easy viewing from inside and outside the locations. Neutral color walls, floors, and lockers line the hallways with the occasional glass trophy and plaque display case. Decorating the halls are signs saying 'No Bullying' and 'Bully Free Zone'. On nice days, students are permitted to gather outside the front entrance of the building after lunch to visit under the supervision of an administrator or staff member.

### *The Classroom*

It is important for teachers to create a safe and open environment where students feel comfortable to share their own stories and experiences (as outlined in Chapter 2). I share the description of the classroom space in order to provide a sense of the environment and perspective of the teacher in creating an atmosphere of learning.

While Mrs. Smith's classroom is not overly ornate she added some personal items such as chili pepper lights, family pictures, and a CD player with soft music playing. Student's desks are lined in traditional rows facing the front whiteboard. The teacher's

desk is located in the back corner of the room along with her computer. An overhead projector and tv/vcr unit are stationed in the front of the room. Classroom materials needed and expectations for the class period are posted outside the classroom on a whiteboard and, again, on a portion of the board sectioned off for each class period. The floors are tile and walls are a neutral color. The back wall is covered by a full length bulletin board displaying Spanish phrases and words, many with pictorial context clues. Windows viewing the administrative building parking lot and gardening center across the street fill the east wall of the classroom. Under the windows are a variety of English and Spanish textbooks and trade books on bookshelves. In the far east corner of the room is a large half-moon table with several free standing chairs placed around its perimeter.

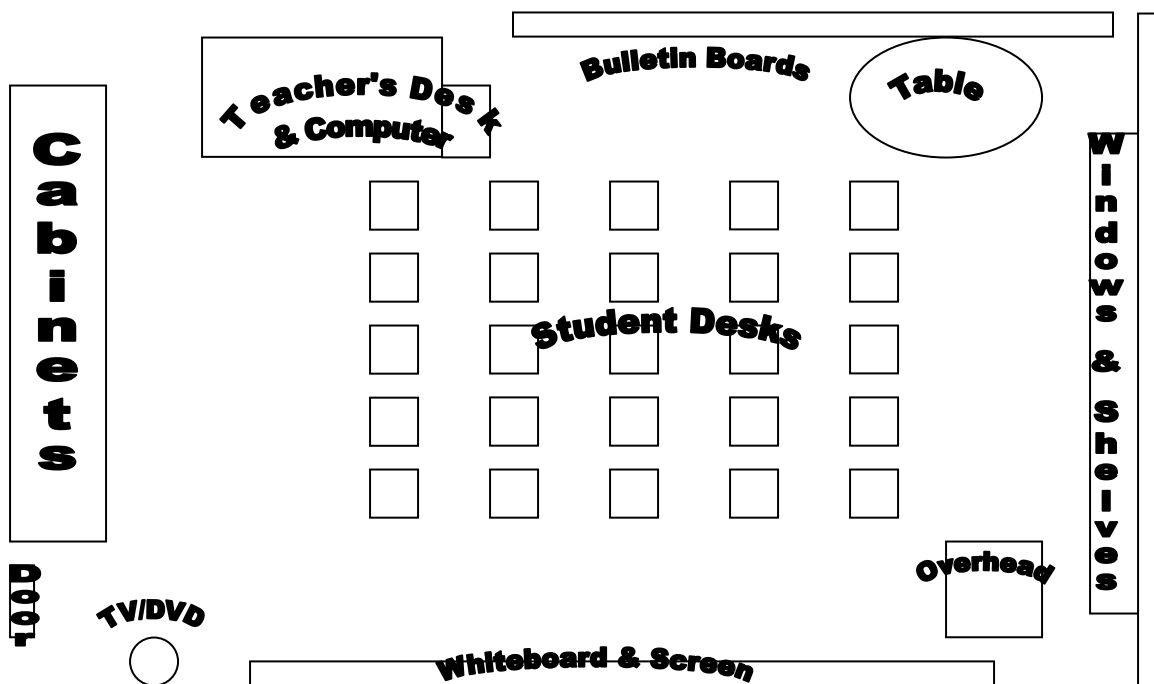


Figure 1. Diagram of Mrs. Smith's seventh grade classroom.

The Communications class meets directly after lunch. After being with friends and visiting in the cafeteria and perhaps outside after lunch, students are a bit unfocused



and at times rowdy entering the classroom. Mrs. Smith is always present near the door of the classroom in the hallway reminding students of appropriate behaviors and taking care of notes and student questions as they enter the classroom during the passing period. When the bell indicates the beginning of class, Mrs. Smith is able to quickly gain student attention and get them on task. The Communications class period lasted from 12:20-1:10 every afternoon.

The focus of my time spent at school and in the classroom was during the Communications period. I made a few additional visits for students to work on the social action project during their study hall with teacher permission. During the last six weeks of the school year, I visited the classroom three to four times per week and collected data.

#### *The Limitations*

The most restricting limitations were imposed by time. Although the Mrs. Smith's class was scheduled to meet for 45 minutes on the master schedule in the principal's office, by the time the students transitioned from lunch and outside time for social interaction, used the restroom, and gathered materials, class rarely started on time with all students present.

With the six week rotating schedule, I had to pay careful attention to the amount of modifications I made to my lessons or scheduling since the class as a social and academic construct did not exist before and would not exist after the six week mark. Therefore, I was working with a finite amount of time to collect the data in a tight and purposeful fashion.

In addition, it was the last six week rotation of the academic school year. Therefore, it would be very difficult to follow-up with students or faculty in regard to

interviews or data collection after the school year ended. This made the emphasis on wisely used time during the six week period even more intense.

Other teachers not participating in the study were not overly receptive in allowing additional time requested by Mrs. Smith and me for the students' presentation of their social action project or the Socratic seminars that occurred after the presentation.

Partially this was due to alternative scheduling in place because of finals week that occurred the same week the social action project was implemented. The principal also suggested that a partial reason for the resistance might have been a lack of research culture in the school.

At times it felt like the data collection portion of this study was rushed. I would have preferred to have more time for students to reflect between lessons sometimes, to be able to conduct interviews during alternate times in the day such as study hall or student resource periods, and to have had opportunities after the social action project presentation for further discussions with the audience.

### *Data Collection*

The following section details the data sources and timeframe for this study.

#### *Data Sources*

*Video-recording.* All of the class sessions including the social action project were videotaped. The videotaping was problematic at times due to the acoustics in the classroom. The air-conditioning unit was very loud. I originally wanted the video camera stationed in the back of the room to be less obtrusive, but when the students spoke it did not carry well to the back of the room. I repositioned the camera on many occasions to try and find the best position for the camera to capture both visual and auditory data. Even

though I was initially concerned about the obtrusiveness if the camera was in front of the class, no comments regarding the videotaping were ever made by the students to the teacher or me. Also, no “performance” type behaviors (coming in close to the camera on purpose, talking directly into the camera, staring at the camera) were ever witnessed.

*Field notes.* Field notes were recorded daily. A detailed description of the graphic organizer utilized and the manner in which field notes were recorded can be found in the previous Constant Comparative Analysis and Constant Comparative Analysis Sample sections of this chapter.

*Survey.* Students were surveyed prior to implementation of the critical literacy lessons. The survey included personal information regarding bullying frequency and types of bullying witnessed at MCMS. The survey was taken from Harris and Petrie (2003, p. 95). The information obtained from the survey was used to begin framing the students’ background and personal experiences with bullying. Figure 2 is a sample survey completed by one of Mrs. Smith’s students.

# APPENDIX B

## STUDENT AND TEACHER SURVEYS TO IDENTIFY BULLYING ON CAMPUS

### STUDENT SURVEY (REV. 11/02)

Please do not put your name on this paper. Your answers should remain anonymous.

#### Section A

- What is your gender?      a) male      b) female
- Are you      a) Black      b) Hispanic      c) White      d) Other?
- What is your grade level?      a) 6th      b) 7th      c) 8th      d) 9th

Bullying is when someone or a group of people repeatedly hurt or frighten someone weaker than themselves for no good reason. This may be done in different ways: by hurtful teasing, threatening actions or gestures, name calling, leaving people out of activities on purpose, spreading rumors about someone, stealing, hitting or kicking, or harassing sexually.

- How often do you notice the following kinds of bullying at school?  
 a) teasing in an unpleasant way      never      sometimes      often  
 b) calling people hurtful names      never      sometimes      often

#### Section B

Now, we would like to know how often *you* have been bullied by other students at school within the past year. Remember: it is *not* bullying when two students of about the same strength fight or quarrel. Bullying is when a stronger person or group of persons deliberately and repeatedly hurts someone who is weaker.

- How often *within this past year* have you been bullied in any way by another student or group of students?  
 a) at least once a week      b) at least once a month      c) never
- How often were *you* bullied this year at school in the following ways?  
 a) teased in an unpleasant way      never      sometimes      often  
 b) called hurtful names      never      sometimes      often  
 c) left out of things on purpose      never      sometimes      often  
 d) threatened with harm      never      sometimes      often

#### Section C

- Have you noticed bullying going on in this school in any of these places?  
 a) in the classroom      sometimes      often  
 b) at recess or break      sometimes      often  
 c) at lunch      sometimes      often  
 d) in the restroom      sometimes      often  
 e) in the hallway      sometimes      often  
 f) on the way to school      sometimes      often  
 g) on the way home from school      sometimes      often  
 h) at extracurricular events      sometimes      often  
 i) at initiations of clubs and teams      sometimes      often
- When at school how safe do you feel from being bullied?  
 a) rarely      b) sometimes      c) usually      d) always

#### Section D

- How often have you been bullied by someone who is weaker than you?  
 a) at least once a week      b) at least once a month      c) never
- How often were *you* bullied this year at school in the following ways?  
 a) teased in an unpleasant way      never      sometimes      often  
 b) called hurtful names      never      sometimes      often  
 c) left out of things on purpose      never      sometimes      often  
 d) threatened with harm      never      sometimes      often

Figure 2. Student survey to identify bullying on campus, front side (Harris & Petrie, 2003, p. 95-96)

**STUDENT SURVEY AND TEACHER SURVEY**

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e) hit or kicked      sometimes      often  
f) had your things stolen      never      sometimes      often  
g) rumors spread about you      never      sometimes      often  
h) harassed sexually      never      sometimes      often

9. After being bullied, how have you generally felt about it?  
a) I'm sad and miserable.  
**b) I'm angry.**  
c) It doesn't really bother me.  
d) I have never been bullied.

10. Have you ever stayed away from school because of bullying?  
a) Yes, I have stayed home from school more than twice because of bullying.  
b) Yes, I have stayed home from school once or twice because of bullying.  
**c) No, but I've thought about staying home from school.**  
d) No, I've never thought of staying home from school.

11. Have you told any of the following persons about being bullied?  
(Circle as many as you have told.)  
**a) mother**      b) father      c) sibling      **d) friend**  
e) teacher      f) principal      g) counselor

12. What happened after you told someone about being bullied at school?  
a) I was bullied, but I never told anyone.  
b) I told, and it got worse.  
c) I told, and the situation didn't change.  
**d) I told, and things got better.**

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15. Do you think that parents at this school are interested in trying to stop bullying?  
a) never      b) sometimes      **c) usually**      d) always

16. Do you think that students, teachers, administrators, and parents should work together to stop bullying?  
a) no      **b) I'm not sure**      c) yes

17. Would you be interested in talking about the problem of bullying at your school with other students to see what can be done about stopping it?  
a) no      b) maybe      **c) yes**

18. Please make one suggestion that would help your school decrease the problem of bullying:  
Like have kids monitor the hall but like no one knows  
they are and if they saw something they could write it down.

**Section C**

13. Do you think that administrators at this school are interested in trying to stop bullying?  
a) never      b) sometimes      **c) usually**      d) always

14. Do you think that teachers at this school are interested in trying to stop bullying?  
a) never      b) sometimes      **c) usually**      d) always

Figure 3. Student survey to identify bullying on campus, back side (Harris & Petrie, 2003, p. 97-98)

*Interviews.* Individual interviews with the principal, vice-principal, school social worker/counselor, and Mrs. Smith were conducted in a semi-structured constructionist format. General questions served as a framework for the interview including school climate, stakeholders, and proactive measures toward bullying behaviors at MC Middle School. Within this framework there were ample opportunities for the participants to digress and give opinion. The interviewee responses guided further exploration of specific topics. My input was very limited with the exceptions of clarification on a response and few instances of devil's advocate in the interviews in order to determine boundaries of agreement or disagreement among interviewees. All interviews were tape-recorded for later transcription.

*Student Products.* In addition to the data collected through discussion and student behaviors, student products were an important tool for capturing the thoughts and experiences of the students in the class. Students wrote in small groups and as individuals. They wrote both informally (for example, brainstorming) and formally (for example, poems and pamphlets). Students did not include their names on any of the products collected, but did include gender on individual work. Therefore, students understood that all artifacts collected would not be returned to them. Artifacts collected during the social action project were able to be generally traced back to students grouped to work on a particular aspect of the project and who performed in each segment of the project. Student products included writing graphic organizers, journal entries, and responses to class discussion.

*Socratic Seminar.* Two Socratic seminars were held after the social action project presentation. One was held involving the students who participated in the study and

designed and implemented the social action project. The second Socratic seminar was held with the students who participated as the audience for the social action project presentation. In both sessions, I posed a broad question to the group regarding the social action presentation, “What did you think of the presentation?” Students then discussed the question asking each other questions, building on each other’s ideas, and expanding the conversation. When the conversation would begin to lull and no student took the initiative to rekindle the conversation, I would pose a new broad question. These follow-up questions were either new strands of concepts not yet covered or questions that grew out of their own discussion that I redirected for further exploration. Each seminar lasted approximately 30 minutes. I did not do any training with the students regarding the Socratic seminar method. Teachers have participated in professional development regarding Socratic seminars and many use it on a regular basis as a strategy in their classroom.

*Student Social Action Presentation.* Mrs. Smith’s seventh grade class chose to present their social action project to another seventh grade class. The presentation modes included a powerpoint presentation, skit, rap video and pamphlet. All elements of the presentation were designed, created, and implemented by the students in Mrs. Smith’s class. Work sessions to develop the presentation were under supervision of Mrs. Smith and myself. The presentation was videotaped and materials were collected for later evaluation.



### *Data Collection Timeframe*

The following table outlines the plan of data collection and timeline for this dissertation.

Table 2. *Data Collection Timeframe*

Timeframe	Researcher Role/Data Collection
February 2006	-Meet with principal and host teacher -Observation of classroom -Approval of Human Subjects Amendment -Gathering signed consent forms -Developing critical literacy lessons (No data collected during this time)
March-April 2006	-Implementation of critical literacy lessons -Audiotaping, videotaping sessions -Observations of classroom -Student planning of social action project -Data Collection -Constant Comparative Analysis of Data -Conducting interviews
May 2006	-Implementation of social action project -Audiotaping, videotaping social action project -Constant Comparative Analysis of Data -Socratic Seminars & interviews conducted
June-September 2006	-Critical Discourse Analysis of selected texts -Inter-coder agreement measures -Constant Comparative Analysis of Data -Review of all data
September 2006-Spring 2007	-Formal Writing of Dissertation

The timeframe for this study spanned 15 months. One month prior to data collection, human subjects approval was updated, arrangements with Mrs. Smith were finalized, and consent forms for distributed and collected. Data collection occurred from late March to mid May in Mrs. Smith's seventh grade class. From June to September, dialogue from videotapes and audiotapes were transcribed, constant comparative analysis continued, and meetings with Dr. Aamidor for discourse analysis took place. From



September to spring I spent time formally writing dissertation chapters as overviewed in Chapter 1.

### *Data Analysis*

The following sections outline two methods, constant comparative analysis and critical discourse analysis, as they pertain to the analysis of this study.

#### *Grounded Theory background to constant comparative analysis*

The goal of grounded theory is to understand what is happening in specific situations and the role of participants in these situations (Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). “What most differentiates grounded theory from much other research is explicitly emergent. It does not test a hypothesis. It sets out to find what theory accounts for the research situation as it is. In this respect it is like action research: the aim is to understand the situation” (Dick, 2005; p. 4).

Glaser and Strauss’ 1967 classic *Discovery of Grounded Theory* outlined a new way of thinking about the emergence of theory in research. While most research at that time had focused on applying developed theories to data collected, Glaser and Strauss desired to focus attention on the “discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research” (p. 2). Since their initial endeavor, Glaser and Strauss have redefined their beginning understandings in separate paths. Glaser (1978, 1992) and Strauss (1997) have differing views of grounded theory. Glaser’s (1978, 1992) perspective is very open and strives to have no preconceived ideas before entering the field, so much so that he prefers entering the field without research problems or questions (Glaser, 1978, 1992). Further, Glaser (1978, 1992) viewed all background knowledge as harmful so literature is not reviewed prior to contact. Glaser (1978, 1992) advocated

coding as an ongoing process which may change as “coding families” emerge. In fact, he strongly rejected axial coding, a practice where events are numbered in a systematic order as a chain of events (Glaser, 1978; Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1997; Titscher et al., 2000).

Strauss and Corbin (1990) opposed on nearly every aspect Glaser sees as fundamental to grounded theory studies. Strauss and Corbin (1990) insisted on having open questions when entering the field and recommend a thorough read of the relevant literature prior to empirical work. Also, they endorse a multi-stage approach to coding where initial codings are summarized on the basis of how they fit into categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Strauss and Corbin (1990) sought to develop criteria by which the data may be verified including the encouragement of axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Titscher et al., 2000).

For this study, I am partially embracing both stances. In the vein of Strauss and Corbin (1990) I did read a thorough review of relevant literature. After doing so, I did enter the field with preconceived research questions. In the spirit of Glaser (1978), I did code in an ongoing fashion. During the coding process, I did allow “coding families” or themes to emerge. The following section regarding constant comparative analysis gives further explanation of coding and analysis practices as framed by grounded theory.

#### *Constant Comparative Analysis*

As discussed in the above section, philosophies and preparation may vary in style (Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). However, common research frameworks in implementation can be found. The usual cycle of a grounded theory study goes through the following stages: data-collection, note-taking, coding, memoing, sorting, writing.

Most data-collection is accomplished through observation, conversation, and interview (Dick, 2005; Titscher et al., 2000). Dick (2005) writes a meta-analysis describing the common threads of implementation. “Constant comparison is the heart of the process. At first you compare interview (or other data) to interview (or other data). Theory emerges quickly. When it has begun to emerge you compare data to theory.” (Dick, 2005, p. 3) As the data is collected, notes are taken, usually alongside the very page the observations are being recorded on. Notes become the early coding of emerging categories (Dick, 2005). Essentially at the same time data is collected and note-taking occurs, memoing takes place. Memoing involves the researcher writing journal-type notes about the categories and concepts emerging (Dick, 2005). These notes can be questions, revelations, etc. As data is collected, notes are taken, and memos are reviewed, the data is being constantly “shuffled” or sorted in order to make the most sense with the literature being reviewed and the emerging categories and theories (Dick, 2005; Titscher et al., 2000). The memos work to build the framework of the study. Once the framework is in place, writing can begin (Dick, 2005; Titscher et al., 2000).

Grounded theory is a foundational element in this study. First, there is freedom in the emerging aspects of grounded theory. Since the categories are not required in advance as in content analysis, the constant comparative analysis strategy will work well with and complement critical discourse analysis. There is also a range of freedom in terms of the aspects analyzed. It can encompass the verbal and nonverbal components of the research I do. Second, the pilot study for this expanded work focused on the use of constant comparative analysis. Therefore, I am familiar with some of the time and organization issues and pitfalls that come with the process. The method worked very well in my pilot.

Third, since critical literacy is still a developing and emerging field with room for new concepts and knowledge to emerge, the focus on emergent information seems like a good fit with my theoretical research perspectives which merges bullying and critical literacy frameworks in a new way.

#### *Constant Comparative Analysis Sample*

In this section I describe how I used constant comparative analysis in this study. The example I use is daily fields of daily field notes. During the class periods where I observed, I took detailed field notes regarding class events and dialogue notes I wanted to return to in more detail via the videotapes. I structured my notes in the form of a two-column graphic organizer. On the left side of the chart I wrote my observations. I began structuring memos with my “first thought” interpretations of what was happening in the situation. For example, in Figure 1 when asked to define the term “perpetrator”, students responded that perpetrators do bad stuff. My initial interpretation is that the information the students have been given in prior lessons regarding types of bullies and bullying roles (see Appendix) has not been scaffolded into their understanding at this point and they are still struggling with conceptual understanding of what a perpetrator is. During the class periods I taught, I used the videotapes as the source for my observations and completed the graphic organizer in the same way as I had completed them when I was an observer in the class.

After each session I reviewed my initial memos and began coding themes that emerged within that one class period. I jotted these emerging themes at the top right side of the front page of my notes each day and placed an asterisk beside them for quick reference in the future. Then I would review my field notes on previous days to see if

there were themes that were threading across the experience. For example, in Figure 1, I continued to track the use of knowledge as a reoccurring theme. I noted in this lesson that knowledge was being built (shown in the student definition responses) but continued to need support (as explained early in the deeper conceptual understanding beyond broad generalized definitions). I also checked to see if I needed to recode any data based on new information. Each day on the top left side of the front page of my notes, I would list the critical literacy principles which seemed most explicit and central to the activities, discussion, and student products. In Figure 1, I initially thought that social action was beginning to emerge as a major theme. However, in further reflection and reviewing my notes with Mrs. Smith, I reconsidered social action as a strongly represented critical literacy theme for Day 7. This is demonstrated by social action being crossed out in the left side column of critical literacy (marked CL) themes.

At the end of each week I reviewed the emerging themes and critical literacy principles that were manifested and reflected on them in reference to my research questions. This was an important step in order to stay focused on the purpose of the dissertation since there was a large amount of data to analyze and it would be easy to go astray and lose focus of the central questions of the research. At the end of data collection, I reviewed all emerging themes and began to cluster them into related categories. These related categories ultimately led to assertions that were made regarding my original research questions.

Figure 4 is a sample of the graphic organizer used. Observations are on the left, memos on the right, emerging themes with asterisks at the top right, and addressed or emergent critical literacy principles at the top left.

<p>Day 7 Date: 4/23/06 Location: MCMS Time: 12:20-1:04</p> <p> <i>Q1</i>  <i>Much, good</i>  <i>(power) Rchr</i>  <i>TV, wild</i> </p>	<p>Observations</p> <p>Researcher opens class by reminding students of the scenarios they worked with on Day 6. Researcher (Rchr) explains that the scenarios worked with last week were simulations of things that may have happened to someone but were not true stories.</p> <p>Rchr introduces the Music Lesson as a true autobiographical short story.</p> <p>Rchr passes out a copy of the Music Lesson to each student. Rchr reviews the perpetrator, victim, ally, bystander vocab.</p> <p>When asked to define perpetrator, boy responds that the perpetrator does bad stuff. Rchr clarifies that falling asleep during class isn't a good choice and may be a bad behavior, but does not make someone a bully. Rchr guides students to define each term conceptually to bullying.</p> <p>Students go on to define target as the person who is bullied, an ally as a friend or someone who sticks up for someone, and a bystander as someone who sees bullying happening but doesn't do anything about it.</p> <p>Rchr passes out perpetrator, target, ally, bystander graphic organizer from the previous week for students to utilize as they</p>	<p>Memos</p> <p> <i>First lesson Rchr interacts w/ students</i>  <i>- link to "real" and "personal"</i>  <i>- concept reinforcement - guidance</i>  <i>- still struggling w/ perpetrator concept</i>  <i>- better understanding</i>  <i>- Review for comparison, reinforced concept</i> </p>
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Figure 4. Graphic organizer displaying Day 7 observations, memoing, emergent themes and emergent critical literacy principles.

### *Critical Theory background to critical discourse analysis*

Critical theory is lens for research in which a range of interpretations exist depending on the perspective and positioning of the subject, researcher, and society (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). Epistemologically, critical theory seeks to both inform and transform society through a variety of lenses (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Critical theory includes a range of studies such as: critical literacy, feminism, queer theory, and critical race theory (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Critical theory can be seen as a framework committed to critiquing society while at the same time empowering the individuals within the society (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

There are many critical theorists with a range of perspectives concerning critical theory itself. From Dewey to Marx critical theorists engage critical theory according to their personal foundational perspectives (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). The range of perspectives among critical theorists is consistent with the core principles of critical theory which seek to avoid concrete applications or one fixed understanding (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). It is in this room for disagreement, surrounding critical theory, where continued discourse is changing, evolving, and mirroring the essence of critical theory itself as it is implemented in research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) “Critical theorists seek to produce practical, pragmatic knowledge that is cultural and structural, judged by its degree of historical situatedness and its ability to produce praxis, or action.” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 249)

For this study, critical literacy practices, encompassed under the umbrella of critical theory, helped a establish a lens for data analysis. As discussed in Chapter 2, lessons designed through a critical lens will allow students opportunities to interrogate

the everyday world, question power relationships, view from multiple perspectives, analyze popular culture and media, and promote social justice through action (Lewison & Leland, 2002). During analysis, these five critical literacy principles were used to provide and existing method for coding during the constant comparative analysis process (as outlined in the above sample). Each lesson that was taught during this study was designed to contain one or more critical literacy principles. Critical literacy and critical literacy principles have been outlined in chapter 2 of this dissertation.

Not only does critical theory frame the use of critical literacy practices, but it also frames the use of critical discourse analysis which is described in the following section.

### *Critical Discourse Analysis*

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) seeks to interpret and explain texts based on its social and political contexts paying specific attention to ideologies and power relationships. “CDA conceptualized languages as a form of social practice, and attempts to make human beings aware of the reciprocal influences of language and social structure of which they are normally unaware” (Titscher et al., 2000, p. 146). Therefore, since Critical Discourse Analysis focuses on the everchanging dynamics and contexts of language, CDA itself is seen as politically involved research as it seeks to impact social practices and relationships (Titscher et al., 2000). Language is a powerful tool. It is more than words simply written on a page or spoken. Language is complex and molds identity, culture, and relationships (Gee, 1999; 2004). Fairclough and Wodak (1997) stated that:

Critical discourse analysis sees discourse—language use in speech and writing- as a form of “social practice”. Describing discourse as social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular



discursive event and the situations(s), institutions(s) and social structure(s) which frame it. A dialectical relationship is a two-way relationship: the discursive event is shaped by situations, institutions and social structures, but it also shapes them. (p. 55)

Theoretically, discourse analysis originates from the work of Antonio Gramsci and the Frankfurt School. Other influential theorists include Mikhail Bakhtin's work in genre theory, Michel Foucault's emphasis on power relationships, Michael Halliday's work in systemic functional linguistics, and Norman Fairclough's work with social identities, knowledge, and relationships. CDA has continued to merge linguistics with social structures (Fairclough, 1995; Titscher et al, 2000). However, with most references for CDA established in the 1990s, CDA is a relatively young science (Fairclough, 1995; Gee, 1999; Titscher et al., 2000; Wodak, 1996).

While theoretically common aspects encompassing discourse analysis create some shared basic assumptions and goals, varying methodologies by which CDA is employed must be specifically referenced in order to fully comprehend the manner in which the analysis is conducted (Titscher et al., 2000).

My data analysis utilizing CDA is focused on the work of James Gee. Gee (1999) separated discourse into two categories: big "D" discourses and little "d" discourses. Little "d" discourses (discourses) are connected stories and conversations while big "D" discourses (Discourses) are "ways of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities, as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes" (Gee, 1999, p. 127).

The number of Discourses in a society is endless and continually changes as new ones are being built, old ones die off, and current Discourses split and combine (Gee, 1999). For example, the hip-hop Discourse of “clowning” in South Central Los Angeles is a Discourse encompassing dance, fashion, and attitude originating out of a need for positive expression and entertainment. “Krumping” is a Discourse grown out of the original “clowning” Discourse with more aggressive movement, attitude, and fashion. Krumping expresses the oppression individuals feel in the same environment and the need to return to the roots of African American culture. As Gee (1999) stated:

The key to Discourses is “recognition”. If you put language, action, interaction, values, beliefs, symbols, objects, tools, and places together in such a way that others recognize you as a particular type of who (identity) engaged in a particular type of what (activity) here and now, then you have pulled off a Discourse (and thereby continued it through history, if only for a while longer). Whatever you have done must be similar enough to other performances to be recognizable. However, if it is different enough from what has gone before, but still recognizable, it can simultaneously change and transform Discourses. If it is not recognizable, then you’re not “in” the Discourse. (p. 18)

Using bullying as an example, bullies who hit, name call, or spread rumors are part of a Discourse that is generally recognizable as bullying (identity and activity). While cyberbullies use the internet and technologies to spread rumors and name call on a grand scale, their actions are similar enough to the original identity and activities of bullies to be associated with bullying (continued through history). Behaviors of students

who have been bullied and then bully others through extreme violence such as the Columbine incident using bombs and guns create a new Discourse of Bullying Terrorism. The boundaries of bullying behaviors are further removed from the original identity and activity of bullies and disturb our understanding and labeling of bullies (thus creating a new Discourse or hybrid).

Gee (1999) stated “essentially a discourse analysis involves asking questions about how language, at a given time and place, is used to construe the aspects of the situation network as realized at that time and place and how the aspects of the situation network simultaneously give meaning to that language” (p. 92). Gee’s (1999) CDA method centers around taking a text and finding the clues which guide the interpreter in sorting the information into six building tasks: semiotic building, world building, activity building, socioculturally-situation identity and relationship building, political building, and connection building. Table 3 outlines the building task I used from Gee (1999) and the role each building task serves in the overall analysis.

Table 3. *Gee’s (1999) six building tasks and their purpose in critical discourse analysis.*

<b>Building Tasks</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
Semiotic building	Deals with the situated knowledge and meanings
World building	Focuses on assembling the semiotic information into what is real/unreal, abstract and concrete elements of the present
Activity building	Concentrated on the role specific actions play in a scenario
Socioculturally-situated identity and relationship building	Centers around the attitudes, emotions, and ways of knowing and believing
Political building	Seeks to construct the relevance of beauty, humor, personality, material goods, etc. effecting power and status
Connection building	Seeks to make assumptions between the past, future, and present moment

Gee (1999) not only outlines six building tasks (see Table 3), but also provides questions that guide the analysis process. Table 4 outlines the guiding questions I used to analyze dialogue through critical discourse analysis. Although Gee (1999) provided a set of 18 questions, I selected questions from that set in order to focus my analysis. There is no one perfect way to orchestrate a discourse analysis (Gee, 1999). However Gee (1999) emphasized, an attempt should be made not only to focus on the fine details of the analysis (words, intonation, etc.), but an attempt should also be made to understand the bigger picture (context, culture, etc.).

Following Gee's (1999) direction, I selected from the set of 18 questions he outlined in his description of an "ideal" discourse analysis. The questions I selected from the set of 18, questions I felt were most pertinent to my own research questions for this study. I was careful to include at least one guiding question for each of the six building tasks in order to gain a sense of the larger context and picture in which that the dialogue was situated in. Specifically, Gee (1999) said:

Actual analysis, of course, usually develops in detail only a small part of the full picture. However, any discourse analysis needs, at least, to give some consideration, if only as background, to the whole picture. Essentially a discourse analysis involves asking questions about how language, at a given time and place, is used to construe the aspects of the situation network as realized at that time and place. (p. 92)

Table 4. *Gee's (1999) six building tasks and selected guiding questions for analysis. (p. 93-94)*

<b>Building Tasks</b>	<b>Guiding Questions for Analysis</b>
Semiotic building	<p>What systems of knowledge and ways of knowing are relevant (and irrelevant) in the situation? How are they made relevant (and irrelevant), and in what ways?</p> <p>What social languages are relevant (and irrelevant) in the situation? How are they made relevant (and irrelevant) in the situation?</p>
World building	<p>What situated meanings and values seem to be attached to places, times, bodies, objects, artifacts, and institutions relevant in this situation?</p> <p>What institutions and/or Discourses are being (re-)produced in this situation and how are they being stabilized or transformed in the act?</p>
Activity building	<p>What is the larger or main activity (or set of activity) going on in the situation?</p>
Socioculturally-situated identity and relationship building	<p>What relationships and identities (roles, positions), with their concomitant personal, social, and cultural knowledge and beliefs (cognition), feelings (affect), and values, seem to be relevant to the situation?</p> <p>How are these relationships and identities stabilized or transformed in the situation?</p>
Political building	<p>What social goods (e.g. status, power, aspects of gender, race, and class, or more narrowly defined social networks and identities) are relevant (and irrelevant) in this situation? How are they made relevant (and irrelevant), and in what ways?</p> <p>How are these social goods connected to the cultural models and Discourses operative in the situation?</p>
Connection building	<p>What sorts of connections-looking backward and/or forward-are made within and across utterances and large sketches of the interaction?</p> <p>What sorts of connections are made to previous or future interactions to other people, ideas, texts, things, institutions, and Discourses outside the current situation?</p>

There were several advantages in using CDA to analyze the data from this study. First, CDA allowed a close look at text and the role language played in creating and maintaining Discourses (Gee, 1999). Text chosen to be analyzed via CDA is not glossed

over or seen only at face value. Rather, text which has been analyzed via CDA has been considered, contemplated, and vetted by two or more sources. Rich research conversations, negotiations, and explanations surround each piece. Second, CDA provides a framework for qualitative research rooted in critical theory to be commonly explored. Through the development of common analysis frameworks, such as Gee (1999), I approached the text I analyzed in a systematic and thorough way. These frameworks also allowed for common language and interpretations among analysts and the research community. While Gee (1999) maintains that there are many ways and, indeed, no one ‘right’ way to analyze through a critical discourse analysis lens, the fundamental principles have been laid out in his research. Third, CDA’s acceptance is growing in the research community. Researchers in critical theory understand and accept the advantages and limitations in using CDA in analyzing data in their own and others’ research (Gee, 1999; Titscher et al., 2000).

#### *Critical Discourse Analysis Sample*

An example of critical discourse analysis used in this dissertation occurred on the first day during the first lesson of this study where students viewed *Let’s Get Real* (Cohen & Chasnoff, 2004), a documentary where middle school students speak candidly regarding others’ and their own bullying behaviors. During the filming of the documentary, filmmakers captured an authentic bullying experience. A middle school boy riding a bicycle is clearly shoved off his bike by others on the playground. Prior to watching the film and again at the beginning of the film, the teacher and filmmakers preface that all conversations and actions in the film are authentic. Students in Mrs. Smith’s class were quiet and attentive during the film with the exception of this specific

bullying scene just described. When students watched the scene, laughter erupted across the room. The following discourse occurred after students viewed the film:

[1] Teacher: I want to ask you about the laughter during the film when the boy was knocked off his bicycle.

[3] Tanya: I think they were making a big deal out of that. It just looked to me like that boy might have just hit a rock or something and tripped.

[5] Teacher: How do you explain the kids with the books that appeared to shove him?

[6] Marcella: I don't know, but it looked to me like maybe they were just trying to help him or stay out of his way?

[8] Teacher: REALLY? (emphasized)

[9] John: Was that real?

[10] Teacher: Yes. Let's take another look. (Teacher shows the segment again on the DVD).

[12] John: Huh...But still, he should've been holding on to the handle bars tighter. Even if the kid did shove him, he shouldn't have fallen like that.

[14] Indiscernible muffled chatter among students.

[15] Teacher: Let's not all speak at one time. Who has something they would like to say?

[16] Janelle: Definitely he should've been holding on tighter.

[17] Natalie: Plus, we don't know what he did to provoke that happening.

[18] Teacher: We will discuss these issues in greater depth in the next few weeks. We may change our mind about some of these ideas.

Asking the guiding questions discussed earlier in Table 4, interpretations were made from this dialogue regarding each of the six building tasks.

*Semiotic building.* The guiding system of knowledge relevant in this situation is that of a traditional school discussion. The teacher is guiding the students with her questions. In line 5, the teacher asks the students to clarify their interpretation of the student behaviors in the film. The students respond to the teacher's questions. In line 6

Marcella gives a possible explanation for what she observed in the film. In a very traditional manner, the teacher then evaluates student responses and creates follow-up questions the attempt to guide or change student perspectives. This is demonstrated in line 8 where the teacher counters Marcella's response with an emphatic REALLY?

The social language is very patterned and traditional and is reinforced and maintained by the teacher. From line 1 to line 12 the flow of the conversation is turn taking from teacher to student and back to teacher. Students are not responding or piggybacking on peer comments. The volley of conversation is two dimensional between the teacher and individual students. In line 14 the students begin to chatter among themselves. The response of the teacher is to quickly stabilize the traditional means of discussion by saying, "Let's not all speak at one time. Who has something they would like to say?" At this point the remainder of the brief discussion reverts back to the original traditional pattern.

*World building.* The students participating in this discussion have an opposing view of the situation than that of the teacher and filmmakers. There initial laughter during the film could have been provoked by a number of things: nervous laughter stemming from an uncomfortable moment of watching someone being bullied, entertainment laughter from watching a DVD they perhaps did not understand to be authentic, malicious laughter understanding the situation but still finding it humorous. Since the source of the laughter was not apparent, the teacher opened the discussion with, "I want to ask you about the laughter during the film when the boy was knocked off his bicycle," out of curiosity and to explore their interpretation and perspective of the scene they witnessed.



At the beginning of the film, the teacher began building the world around this study by explaining that students would be discussing and exploring the issue of bullying in a new and open manner, one they may not have experienced before in school. Line 1 would seem to suggest at first glance that the scene is open for discussion since the manner of this initial statement is fairly neutral. However, when the students appear to take her up on the offer of open dialogue, the teacher does not continue the situation with the same spirit of valuing multiple perspectives and quickly reverts to building a traditional classroom world where teachers try to impart and guide knowledge of students who are less informed or aware. This is seen in her responses in lines 5, 8, 10, and 18.

*Activity building.* The context for this dialogue was centered in the film. Throughout most of the film, the student activity was limited as students were attentive to the film and I did not observe any demonstration of other activities going on, for example, whispered discussion and doodling. The activity that this dialogue really focuses on is the simultaneous outburst of laughter the students demonstrated during the bullying scene. The solidarity of their laughter may indicate a need to follow the crowd in a new social construct or activity that is different than what they are accustomed to in the school setting. It is interesting to note that the teacher did not intervene at the point of laughter, but chose to wait until the end of the film and discuss their collective response. The collective response of laughter indicates a level of resistance to the filmmakers' views. Their resistance continues toward the teacher's viewpoint during the discussion as Tanya (line 3), Marcella (line 6), John (line 12), Janelle (line 16), and Natalie (line 17) voice opposition to the teacher's perspective of the situation. This is not to say that the students are aligning with the bully in the film or with bullying in general. It may not

necessarily indicate comradery connections with the bully, but a comradery in opposition to the authority of adults (teachers, filmmakers).

*Socioculturally-situated identity and relationship building.* The power relationship between teacher and students is evident in this dialogue. Even though the teacher, class, and my presence in the classroom was new to them (it was the second day of class for their rotation), the students were not intimidated to share their opinions. Whether their strong opposition (lines 3, 6, 12, 16, and 17) was based on their beliefs, values, knowledge, or attitudes about bullying or whether their opposition was a power move in relation to the teacher, the students maintained their stance. The dialogue is a standoff where neither the teacher nor the students are swayed by the opinions of the other. In the end, the teacher still attempts to maintain control by having the final word in line 18, “We will discuss these issues in greater depth in the next few weeks. We may change our mind about some of these ideas.” Interestingly, the teacher does use the “we” pronoun, not only suggesting that the students, but she as well, may change and alter their views. This final statement in line 18 bookends the opening statement in line 1. Both suggest an open conversation for change and exploration. However, lines 3-17 are very traditional in nature, as described in the other building task sections, where the conversation is narrow and the opportunity for exploration or the willingness to change is limited.

*Political building.* The power in traditional classrooms is typically in the hands of the teacher. In this situation, the teacher outlines to the students a shift in power where their voices will be valued and heard. However, the social network of “school” is powerful in and of itself and the teacher struggles with relinquishing some of her power

to the students. Line 8 where the teacher emphatically questions the student response with “REALLY?” is an example of her setting herself in the “right/correct” position as the teacher and perhaps is meant to create self-doubt or uncertainty among the students. The students who speak out in the discussion (lines 3, 6, 12, 16, 17) may be attempting to raise their status with peers as they exhibit power in opposition to the teacher.

*Connection building.* A majority of the students are familiar with the teacher who has served lunchroom and break duty for the students. Some of the students were in a previous class with her the year before. The teacher is also a present figure in the halls monitoring students between passing periods. These students come to the dialogue with these previous connections to the teacher. Perhaps their response to the situation and the dialogue is connected to behaviors or incidents which they may have been involved in prior to this classroom experience. The teacher does fill-in in the principal’s office in an administrative capacity when he is away. For example, maybe they have been disciplined or supported, or witnessed the teacher conducting herself outside of the classroom and attached meaning from those experiences onto this one.

Specifically, the students appeared to make a connection with the teacher’s explanation (made at the beginning of class) regarding an open discussion with a free space for multiple perspectives and opinions. Perhaps the student responses are, at least partly, reflective of their developmental stage as middle school students questioning authority, values, knowledge, and emotions (AACAP, 1997) or perhaps they are brought about by the invitation of the teacher to share the power of the classroom. Either way, students made the connection that their voice was meant to be heard and they did not break connection with that desire (lines 3, 6, 9, 12, 14, 16, 17).

*Summary.* By asking poignant questions about this sample dialogue, I was able to gain insight and form interpretations about the way in which knowledge was being constructed in the situation, examine relationships and identities, explore social goods including power and status and begin to make connections between previous events and how they may impact present or future situations. Using Gee's (1999) six building tasks (semiotic building, world building, activity building, socioculturally-situated identity and relationship building, political building, and connection building) allows me to take a close look at text through a systematic approach to investigate the role of language in creating and maintaining Discourses (Gee, 1999).

#### *Trustworthiness of Findings*

Reviewing data with peers was vital in interpreting the data for this study. I reviewed data with my colleague, Dr. Shirley Aamidor, who questioned and expanded my interpretations. Dr. Aamidor assisted me in the critical discourse analysis process. We spent time individually looking at portions of dialogue and asking the questions set out by Gee (1999) and explained earlier in this chapter. After interpreting the data separately, Dr. Aamidor and I spent time together discussing our interpretations for matching themes and noting any additional insights or discrepancies. Gee (1999) accepted this concept of validity by stating, "validity is never "once and for all". All analyses are open to further discussion and dispute and their status can go up or down with time as the work goes on in the field" (p. 95). Discourse analysis does not seek the one "true reality". Rather, it seeks to interpret the language in a given context (Gee, 1999). "The analyst interprets his or her data in a certain way and that data so interpreted, in turn, renders the analysis meaningful in certain ways and not in others" (p. 94).

In addition to working with Dr. Aamidor on the critical discourse analysis, I also spoke each session with Mrs. Ives concerning my initial observations. Through our discussion she was able to confirm my emerging interpretations, provide further insight, or challenge me to think from a different perspective.

Triangulation of data has been carefully aligned (Denzin & Lincoln, 1997; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). Data were reviewed and coded for emerging themes which were supported by three or more supporting data points. Triangulation was achieved through a theme occurring multiple times within one data point or through multiple data points supporting one theme (Denzin & Lincoln, 1997; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). Once triangulation of data points occurred and themes were identified, themes were then reviewed for overarching concepts that evolved into assertions.

In Chapter 3 I reviewed the theoretical perspectives of methodology including critical theory and grounded theory. Constant comparison analysis and discourse analysis were explained and samples were reviewed. I also described the types of data collected during this dissertation. In the following chapters, I lay out the assertions derived from this study, the themes that are categorized under each assertion, and the data points which support each theme.

## Chapter 4

### Results

In this Chapter I discuss data addressing the three research questions outlined in Chapter 3, which are:

1. How will a teacher-directed bullying unit utilizing critical literacy practices impact a middle school seventh grade class?
2. How will a student-directed social action project on bullying, developed and implemented by middle school students, impact the students who developed the project and the selected audience?
3. To what extent will the combination of critical literacy practices addressing the issue of bullying work as an anti-bully strategy?

After reviewing the data and deciding on how best to organize the results for clarity, I have chosen to report my data according to the five critical literacy principles. In Chapter 3 I described how critical literacy practices are well suited to address the complex issue of bullying. Specifically, I outlined how combining critical literacy practices with bullying provided opportunities for interrogating bullying in the everyday world, understanding bullying by analyzing power relationships, viewing bullying from multiple perspectives and realities, analyzing how bullying is portrayed in popular culture and media, and promoting social action toward justice regarding bullying. The five critical literacy components are a logical reporting template in which all three research questions will be addressed. While I separate out the five principles for the sake of organization, it is important to understand that the principles are not static. They intertwine and are often represented simultaneously. They build on each other and

support each other. Therefore, I have selected data samples that I feel best represent a particular principle. Some of the selected data samples could arguably be used in other areas of this chapter to demonstrate other points. I have made my data and placement selections based on how I see the pieces fit into the larger picture of what occurred during this study. In this chapter, I specifically address interrogating bullying by disrupting the everyday world, understanding bullying by questioning power relationships, viewing bullying from multiple perspectives and realities, and analyzing bullying as portrayed in popular culture and media.

Using the constant comparative analysis method explained in Chapter 3, I coded and sorted data according to which critical literacy component was most evident. I then continued to re-sort and triangulate the data. In this process I looked for multiple sources, multiple activities, or a single source with multiple examples which developed similar patterns of information. For example, in the first section (to follow) reporting data regarding interrogating bullying by disrupting the everyday world, a subcategory emerged from the data which I title “So what is bullying anyway?” This section contains multiple sources at multiple times questioning stereotypical definitions and concepts about bullying behaviors. Since these patterns emerged through the data and were able to be triangulated, I made the decision to include them as an important subheading of the section. The underpinning to that decision was made by referring back to Chapter 3 where the literature outlined the combination of interrogating bullying by disrupting the everyday world. From my research perspective and the story my study tells, I placed this questioning of common and often stereotypical bullying definitions and conceptual understanding to support the heading for interrogating bullying (the students’

questioning) by disrupting (the students' struggle) the everyday world (common/stereotypical bullying definitions and concepts).

Since the emerging themes and patterns spanned the duration of the research, the triangulation of data might occur from data collected from Day 1, 7, and 20. Therefore, for purposes of reporting this study, I report on the patterns and include references to daily timelines when appropriate. The Appendix gSmith further information on the daily lessons in the order in which they occurred. All data collected was carefully reviewed and analyzed, but is not provided in the following sections according to a calendar timeline (for example, according to what occurred week 1, week 2, etc.). Rather, the data analysis spans the calendar timeline, but is ultimately organized and reported according to critical literacy components.

### *Interrogating Bullying by Disrupting the Everyday World*

In learning to question the everyday world, first, the everyday world must be recognized. The school environment has a strong impact on the implementation of critical literacy practices addressing bullying in a middle school setting. For example, what is bullying? How open are the spaces to question and debate bullying? What boundaries exist in the everyday world which may inhibit the opportunities to question bullying? What is the level of knowledge and background experiences students and teachers have regarding bullying in the everyday world of a middle school student? Under what conditions do students begin to make personal connections to bullying issues? Questioning the everyday world is where I really wanted students to begin the journey into this study.



*So what is bullying anyway?*

We began the study by asking students to write a definition of bullying in order to find out what preconceived perspectives the students held from experiences in their everyday world that influence what they believe and understand about bullying behaviors. Their responses did not prove surprising. Their answers reflected the information outlined in Chapter 2 regarding types of bullying. Some examples of student definitions are: Bullying is when someone hits someone else; I can't stand it when bullies gossip about other people. I coded student responses according to themes that emerged from their definitions. I coded the earlier sampled response of "bullying is when someone hits someone else" as physical bullying, specifically hitting. However, student responses were not categorized as a whole. Some contained multiple elements for coding. For example, "bullying is when people shove and call people names". This response was coded for physical bullying, specifically shoving, and verbal bullying, specifically name calling. The frequency portion of the table below reflect the number of times those elements arose in the responses. A majority of students identified and included elements of physical and verbal bullying behaviors (see Table 5). Many students included broad general statements in their remarks which were nonspecific in method or type of bullying, yet still on topic. An example of this is, "I think bullying is mean." It is true that bullying is mean, and the response is appropriately on target with the topic of bullying, yet it does not give a specific method, type, or context of bullying. Instead, it is a general statement about bullying. All student responses fit into one of these three categories (physical bullying, verbal bullying, or nonspecific yet on topic). No responses were discarded or

contained information that was considered outside of the parameters of the three categories.

Table 5. *Initial student bullying definitions.*

Theme	Frequency	Specifics in Definitions
Physical Bullying	11	Hurting in physical ways Bigger kid beating up... Pushing Shoving (2) Hitting (4) Stealing Mean pranks
Verbal Bullying	9	Hurting in vocal ways Kids go around talking about.... Name calling (3) Liar Rumors (2) Insults
Nonspecific Method (But still on topic)	14	Harassing Picking Threatening Mean (5) Rude Messes with someone Hurt feelings (2) Sadness Teasing

Student responses in Table 5 did not surprise me. As the literature review in Chapter 2 explained, people primarily define and understand bullying as a physical act. Some headway has been made in raising awareness regarding the impact of verbal bullying on victims. Also, the large amount of general responses which deem bullying as bad or negative, but with no specific understanding of bullying fits stereotypical molds of our society's understanding or lack of clarity regarding bullying behaviors and issues.

### *Opportunities to Question*

After reviewing the student definitions of bullying, lessons were designed, shaped, and redirected to give students ample opportunities to question. While I had the lessons outlined that I wanted to teach, mostly based on research and my own prior experiences, I used the student definitions to tweek my lesson outlines in order to incorporate the students' prior knowledge and current interests. Given the general understanding of bullying being negative and physical, I made adjustments on the amount of background I needed to give about bullying. I redirected lessons to spend more time with types of bullying and decision making in bullying roles. The following section described the students' journey in learning to question the everyday world.

*Whose to blame?* A fundamental question students grappled with throughout the study was one of blame. In the beginning of the study and throughout the middle, several instances were recorded of students placing or searching for whom to blame for bullying behaviors. Interestingly enough, they often searched for the blame within the actions of the victim, rather than the bully. This section describes four instances where students wrestled with placing blame in real scenarios..

The first debate regarding blame came during the first class discussion. After viewing *Let's Get Real* (Cohen & Chasnoff, 2004), a documentary film where middle school students describe their own battles with bullying behaviors, students questioned the victim within a bullying situation. As described in the Critical Discourse Analysis Sample in Chapter 3 about a scene in the film where a bullying event is captured on film, students responded adversely. Instead of being shocked by the scenario, students sought to justify the action and place blame on the victim. The victim had been pushed off his

bike. The students gave multiple scenarios which relieved the bully of all responsibility and shifted blame onto the victim. Suggestions included that the victim should've been holding onto the handlebars tighter, that they did not know what the victim had done to provoke the incident, and that perhaps this was not a bullying episode at all but was an accident caused by a rock (see Chapter 3, Sample Discourse Analysis).

A second time occurred during a discussion on Day 3 (see Appendix) concerning *Just Once Flick of a Finger* (Lorbiecki, 1996), a book describing an incident where a victim retaliates by bringing a gun to school to intimidate a bully, students discussed the role of the teacher in the story. The teacher sees a potential confrontation in the school yard and directs both the two main characters to move on their way. The focus of the lesson was to identify the bullying roles (perpetrator, victim, ally, bystander) within the text. Mrs. Smith lead the discussion as students struggled to identify the perpetrator, or bully, within the story. The following is a portion of the discussion:

[32] Tim: I see an ally.

[33] Mrs. Smith: Who is the ally?

[34] Tim: The teacher is the ally.

[35] Mrs. Smith: Anything else?

[36] Michelle: I think the teacher is the bully.

[37] Mrs. Smith: The teacher is the perpetrator? Why do you say that?

[38] Michelle: Cause her target is Rebo.

[39] Mrs. Smith: It is true that Rebo is the target of her attention at this moment...but in terms of bullying...*is* she bullying him?

[41] Tim: Rebo is the bully.

[42] Mrs. Smith: OK

[43] Michelle: I don't agree with that. He was just going to class and then the teacher got in his business. Rebo is the target. I still think the teacher is the perpetrator.

[46] Mrs. Smith: I understand that some people might view that situation from your perspective, but for our understanding and purposes in the class, the teacher in *this* story is not bullying him. Now, is he the focus of her attention?...you bet...but not in a negative way, in an intervening way.

Here again, a student is reluctant to place blame on the bully. Instead, she has focused her attention to lay blame with the teacher. This may not be a surprising response given research that shows students having negative feelings about teacher responses to bullying behaviors and the lack of teacher advocacy from student perspectives (Rigby & Bagshaw, 2003). In line 36, 38, and 43 of the discourse above, Michelle is adamant that the teacher is the bully in the scenario. Here, Mrs. Smith is very directive in her responses. She does not value the perspective of Michelle, and continues to try and redirect her thinking toward the teacher as ally. Perhaps the line of thinking that teachers are bullies is uncomfortable for Mrs. Smith or perhaps she is thinking traditionally in terms of class discussions where there is one correct answer. Whatever the reason, Mrs. Smith does not open the space for Michelle to voice her opinions about teachers, specifically her perspective of the teacher in the text. Interestingly enough, Michelle is not convinced and does not waiver in her belief as the teacher and other peers attempt to convince her otherwise.

A third instance occurred on the day a guest speaker was brought into class. The guest speaker named Mike who was male, in his late twenties, large in height and build. The speaker interacted in an interview-style presentation with me. During the presentation, Mike discussed his torment with bullies as a child and how it negatively

affected him even into adulthood. At the end of the presentation, students were given opportunities to ask questions. The following is a portion of the dialogue that occurred during the question and answer period:

[149] Staci: When you said that you fought a lot...what did you do to instigate that?

[151] Mike: I really didn't do anything to instigate the fighting.

[152] Staci: Was everybody against you?

[153] Mike: Like I said, I had a couple of friends, but really pretty much everybody was against me. It started with one ring leader and slowly progressed to everyone.

[155] Staci: So I don't want to say that you provoked anything...but you can't think of anything you did to make them treat you like that?

[157] Mike: No. I was pretty much just being myself, doing my own thing.

The following interpretations were generated through the critical discourse analysis process explained in Chapter 3.

Activity building. The guest speaker gave his personal account of being bullied in elementary school and how it negatively impacted his self-esteem and own bullying behaviors through middle school and on to adulthood.

Semiotic building. In this activity, personal experiences are seen as a way of knowing and obtaining information that is relevant to others. The focus of the activity bring the victim's voice to the forefront of the bullying conversation. Common assumptions about bullying are manifested in the dialogue: 1) all schools are places where bullying behaviors occur 2) bullying is a common (although morphing) negative social behavior whether it took place over twenty years ago, as in the guest speaker's case, or in present day.

Political building. Students question Mike's status and power in trying to discern his social standing and whom might have been of assistance to him. Mike reinforces his perspective and is not swayed in stating, "Like I said, I had a couple of friends, but really pretty much everybody was against me. It started with one ring leader and slowly progressed to everyone."

Connection building. This portion of the dialogue is framed by a larger context where the guest speaker is connecting his past situations to his present life and how it will impact the future through the parenting of his son. The connections of the guest speaker displays the impact of choices made on the future and how bullying circumstances live behind the moment.

World building and socioculturally-situated identity and relationship building. Here, Staci is trying to find someone to blame for the negative behaviors of a bully. Not only does she ask once, "What did you do to instigate that?" she asks again, "You can't think of anything you did to make them treat you like that?" Staci is questioning the legitimacy of the bullying behaviors and seeking to find at least some degree of responsibility within the victim. This questioning and placing of blame reinforces dominant perspectives of bullying where bullies are instigated and victims are not as innocent as what they may appear.

A fourth instance appeared in student written responses. On Day 10, students were asked to write Forgiveness Poems (Christensen, 2000). The focus of the writing was to give students opportunities to ask forgiveness for their own behaviors or to forgive someone for what was done to them. In some cases, students chose to write Unforgiveness Poems (to be discussed in a later section of this chapter), and in a few

instances, students wrote poems which gave advice to others in those situations if they felt they had nothing to forgive or be forgiven for. Figure 5 demonstrates a female writer who chose to write an advice poem to targets.

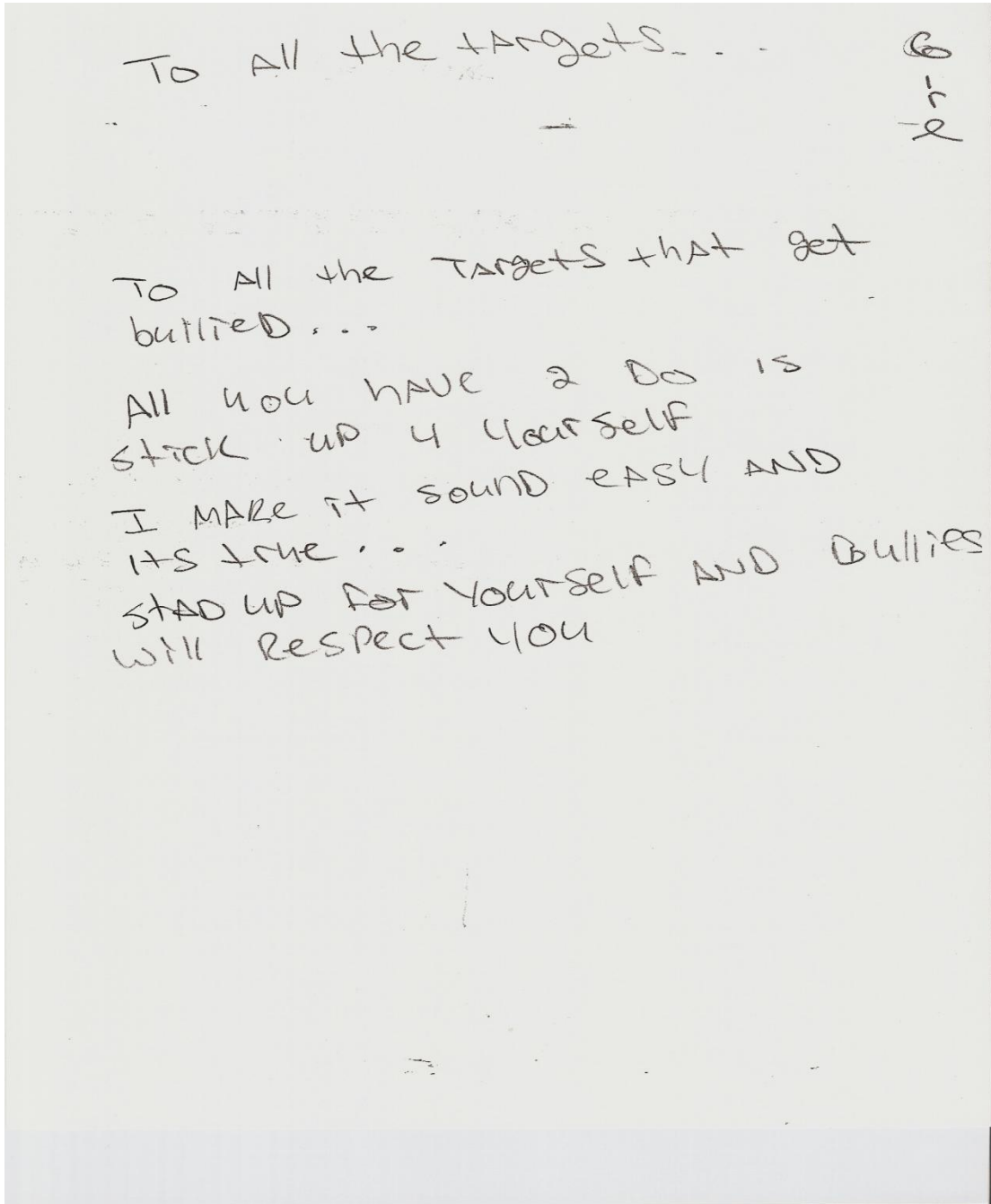


Figure 5. Female student poem giving advice to targets.



This writer is frustrated with targets. She sees them as passive individuals who just need to make an easy adjustment in their behaviors that would reposition the power within the bullying situation. In other words, this writer sees the victim responsible for the power to change. In some ways it is the victim who is to blame for the lack of change in their circumstances.

The students' search for someone to blame may not only indicate a lack of understanding regarding bullying roles, but it may also indicate a reluctance to reflect on their own experiences and behaviors and perhaps challenge those behaviors and how, when, and why they were manifested.

*Where to Begin?* In Chapter 2, I explored the role of the teacher in implementing critical literacy practices in the classroom. Decisions teachers make regarding content, context, boundaries, materials, and instruction impact the students within the classroom. While it is true that the role of the teacher is central in determining the climate of the classroom, the other adults in the school setting and the decisions they make also impact students. During data analysis, the importance of the teacher's role and the impact of school climate surfaced repeatedly as a theme in student comments, adult interviews, and my own observations regarding student freedom to question

In the early stages of data collection, Mrs. Smith did not spend much time setting up the discussion guidelines with the students for the study. Instead of spending time considering and talking to students about how critical literacy practices addressing a sociopolitical topic may alter typical discussion guidelines, for the most part, the study began and organically evolved given the students' interest and teacher and researcher observations. Many times within the first five days of data collection, Mrs. Smith had to

address questions about the parameters of anti-bully discussions within the lesson activities. On several occasions, even after Mrs. Smith would clarify, students would seek to create clearer understanding of the purpose or implementation of the activity.

For example, the following dialogue occurred on the first day of data collection. The students were asked to spend some time individually brainstorming a definition for “bullying”. After students had time to write, they were then asked to turn and share their thoughts with a partner. Mrs. Smith circulated throughout the room listening to the students sharing. After two or three minutes she realized that the students were speaking about specific bullying issues using their peers’ real names. She then interrupted the students to make the following announcement:

[10] Mrs. Smith: I should’ve mentioned this earlier, but we do not want to use real names for our discussion time...rumors get started...people who aren’t here may not understand or know what we are talking about or doing. The things that we discuss in here should remain private and not shared outside of class unless you ask me about it first. Certainly we don’t want to talk about others, because you wouldn’t want them to talk about you.

[16] Jackie: What if it’s a good thing?

[17] Mrs. Smith: For now, until we learn more, we need to respect the sharing in the room. I think that’s probably best. Ok?

[19] Tasha: Then how will we talk about someone in here?

[20] Mrs. Smith: You can just make up a name, like ‘Bob’.

In this conversation the teacher did not set up any guidelines for the discussion in advance with the students. She realized by monitoring the students that the issue of confidentiality needed to be addressed. Since this issue had not been contemplated in advance, the conversation is a bit awkward as the students and teacher search for clarity and a common language regarding confidentiality versus secrecy, sharing versus gossip.

In this example, the teacher and student negotiate how to speak about situations or people without mentioning names, but the issue of discussion outside of class is still left unresolved. Although the boundary is made to maintain confidentiality within the class setting, no rationale is given. This unresolved dialogue poses dichotomous viewpoints. On the one hand, critical literacy practices are to open up intellectual spaces where freedom of ideas and viewpoints are valued, yet this impromptu boundary potentially closes up the space and alludes to rather secretive behaviors.

In another example of dialogue where students are asked to explain the difference between bullying and teasing, the same pattern appears:

[26] Todd: Holding a ball too high or not giving a dog a bone is teasing.

[27] Mrs. Smith: The na na na na stuff?

[28] Todd: Yeah.

[29] Mrs. Smith: What do you think the difference is between bullying and being disrespectful?

[31] Jeremy: Being disrespectful is like interrupting while someone is talking. My little sister is always in trouble for that. Sometimes I do...like talking back and stuff.

[34] Mrs. Smith: You don't have to confess anything at this time. Don't feel like you have to...

[35] Janie: I know sometimes I talk rude to people, even friends.

[36] Tasha: Yeah. I know. I just seems like sometimes I'm rude to family.

[37] Mrs. Smith.: Really. This isn't necessarily a time for 'true confessions'. You don't have to tell on your own behavior, but obviously you are thinking about your own behavior and relating to this topic personally. I can understand that.

Again, opposing ideas are expressed in determining the parameters of the conversation. Mrs. Smith opens up the topic and acknowledges that students are thinking and relating personally to the discussion. However, there is an issue in how much the students are to share. Whether Mrs. Smith is uncomfortable with the conversation and student responses or if she is trying to preserve issues of confidentiality, there is a gray area of what is expected and accepted by the teacher. While Mrs. Smith is a veteran teacher who uses group work and sharing on a regular basis, perhaps the introduction of socially charged and personal topic such as bullying has created the unforeseen issues which do not usually present themselves when more traditionally sterile topics are discussed.

Not only is Mrs. Smith maneuvering her way in the beginning stages of bringing critical practices and bullying into her classroom, but her uncertainty is mirrored in other school adults who are at varying and competing stages of understanding as they begin to address bullying at their school in compliance with state anti-bully legislation as well. When interviewing Mrs. Smith, this is what she had to say regarding school bullying policies:

[21] Researcher: What current policies are in place to address bullying?

[22] Mrs. Smith: Well, the policy says ‘zero tolerance’.

[23] Researcher: Which policies?...said or written?

[24] Mrs. Smith: The student handbook says that we have a ‘zero tolerance’ policy in regard to bullying.

[26] Researcher: Would you say that is mildly, moderately, heavily, or not enforced?

[28] Mrs. Smith: I would say that it is sporadic..um..even when we have had instances of physical bullying...the policy says that students will be immediately suspended.....that is not enforced.

In a similar interview with Mr. Tucker, the vice principal in charge of seventh grade discipline, his answer to the question varied.

[56] Mr. Tucker: First of all, we act on everything. You know the state of Indiana is really big right now on passing legislation on bullying. The biggest thing in what are we doing to address bullying is that first of all, we do address it. We tell our teachers, we tell our staff members, someone comes to you and says 'they've threatened me, they've said something inappropriate about me', you can't just hold off and say 'sticks and stone's or 'don't worry about it' or 'ignore it'. We address everything. That's hard. Cause how many times is it brought to my attention or to a teachers attention?...we have to follow through.

Later in the same interview, Mr. Tucker addresses zero tolerance policies.

[90] Researcher: But you are not a zero tolerance policy school when it comes to bullying?

[92] Mr. Tucker: No, because it's hard to say, cause when you put zero tolerance out there what you're saying is that any time something comes up....we're basically....you're not allowing anything.

[95] Researcher: What does your student handbook say?

[96] Mr. Tucker: Yeah, it doesn't state that. Again, you as an administrator...you and the kids and your school...your kids understand expectations, through either your words or your actions. So the kids are going to, just like in a classroom, are gonna figure out 'what am I allowed to do or say' in a classroom, in a hall, in a school. And that has be reflected by everyone involved.

In a final interview with Mr. Hall, the principal of MC Middle School, his answer to the bullying policies were:

[14] Researcher: Can you tell me about what policies you currently have in place regarding bullying?

[16] Mr. Hall: The handbook has included bullying language and reference to the Anti-Bully law. We do not have a pure zero tolerance policy. It is not written anywhere. I am not an advocate for one. Discipline for bullying lies in the burden of proof. It becomes he said/she said. Most bullies are sneaky enough and smart enough that they will bully when no witnesses are around. The school can bluff to

try and intimidate and get a confession, but they really don't have a leg to stand on without proof. We due have suspension, expulsion, and the usual tactics which can be implemented if we have satisfied the burden of proof. The school has not developed a plan to comply to the new law...except the discipline policies in place to meet law expectations.

Comparing these three interviews, issues concerning bullying discipline measures within the school are apparent. First, there is confusion regarding school authority. There is a disconnect in understanding ranging from zero tolerance boundaries to burden of proof in disciplinary action. Second, reports on how the consequences for bullying behaviors are carried out is conflicting. Again, there seems to be a range of perspectives in the interpretation of school policy which include the addressing of all bullying behaviors and reports in nonspecific ways. On the other hand, there is also the boundary of expulsion and suspension. However, the frequency of expulsion and suspension seem to conflict in regularity and with regards to their perspective on the boundaries of school authority. Particularly noted are the adamant remarks from Mr. Tucker in addressing all bullying issues but equally adamant about not implementing zero tolerance because you have to address all bullying issues. Such paradoxes and changing perspectives leave the adults in the space confused about how and when bullying is addressed.

In determining where to begin on the journey of integrating critical literacy and bullying frameworks, an important issue is contemplating how to open up spaces for students to discuss tough social and political issues. While teachers cannot foresee all potential issues which may arise, it is still important for teachers to think carefully and equip the students with how a critical discussion differs from a traditional discussion. Certain elements, such as the importance of confidentiality, can protect and help create a

safe space for students to share, but they can also limit exploration if not explained and understood by the participants. Knowing students, school climate, and social and cultural norms of the community may help teachers determine a starting point for their classroom.

*Personal Connections.* Day 1 through 10 of the study included lessons which were not only critical in content, but also gave students multiple avenues to express themselves. Students worked in small groups, participated in open discussions and debates, and utilized text through short stories, film, and picture books. Students related personally to the content and shared openly about their personal experiences through small and large group discussions.

For example, *The Music Lesson* (Stucki, 2000) was read and discussed on Day 6 of the study. *The Music Lesson* is a short autobiographical story of a bystander's perspective about a boy who is bullied by his music teacher in front of his peers. After spending large group time reading and discussing the selection, students were asked to do a journal writing responding to the story. Figures 6, 7, and 8 are student writing samples from this lesson.

The writer in Figure 6 voices personal emotions such as “sad” and “mad”. There is a sense of collegiality as the writer sympathizes with the main character in the story as they state, “everyone laughs once in awhile”. Not only are there text to self connections made in this writing sample, but also the writer begins to broaden his personal connections to others. An example of this text to world connection is, “It also makes me feel like it could happen everyday to people we don’t know.” Finally, this sample ends with a message of advocacy and action, stating, “I think we should try to stop this problem period.”

I feel mad and sad, I feel mad because I don't think a teacher should be bullying a kid. I feel sad because Mark didn't do anything but laugh, but everyone laughs once and awhile and he got in trouble that is not fair.

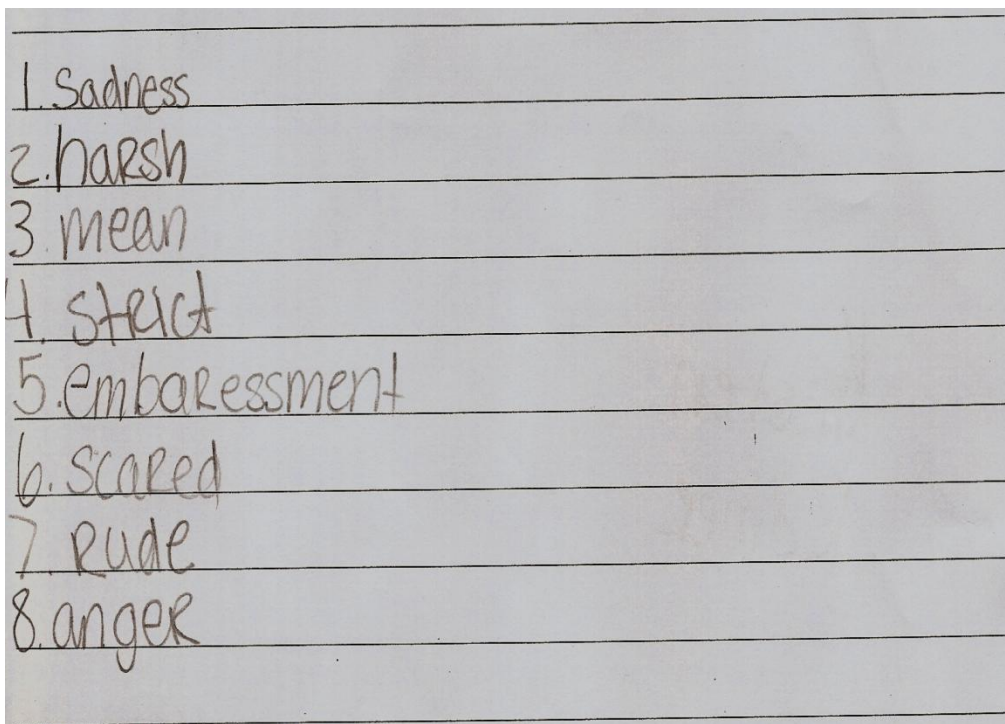
It's relating to our studying because we are dealing with bullying and the teacher bullied a kid, and we are all

It also makes me feel like it could happen everyday to people we don't know. I think we should try to stop this problem period.

Figure 6. Music lesson student journal writing exemplifying student personal connections.



In Figure 7 a sample of a different student from the same Music Lesson activity shows personal connection by listing the gambit of emotions she felt as she was reading the story. Some of the emotions are very introspective such as sadness, scared, and embarrassment. Other emotions carry connotations that are typically directed outward such as anger, rude, harsh, mean and strict.



*Figure 7.* Music Lesson student writing sample listing emotional connections to the text.

Students were able to personalize with text. They connected emotions and related feelings of action to the story. Later in Chapter 5, I will address the transference of these personal experiences and connections into the social action project. In a further example from the Forgiveness Poetry lesson, many students questioned their experiences with bullying from multiple roles.

Finally, Figure 8 is an student sample from a lesson on writing forgiveness poetry (Christensen, 2000) which followed a guest speaker's presentation on being bullied as a child. In this example, the student expresses regret for her actions, apologizing and admitting that it wasn't an acceptable behavior to name call. Also, there is a personal connection to the victim's perspective and emotions the bullying may have stirred in the victim, "I would feel bad and down." This sample writing demonstrates the writer beginning to question his own bullying behaviors.

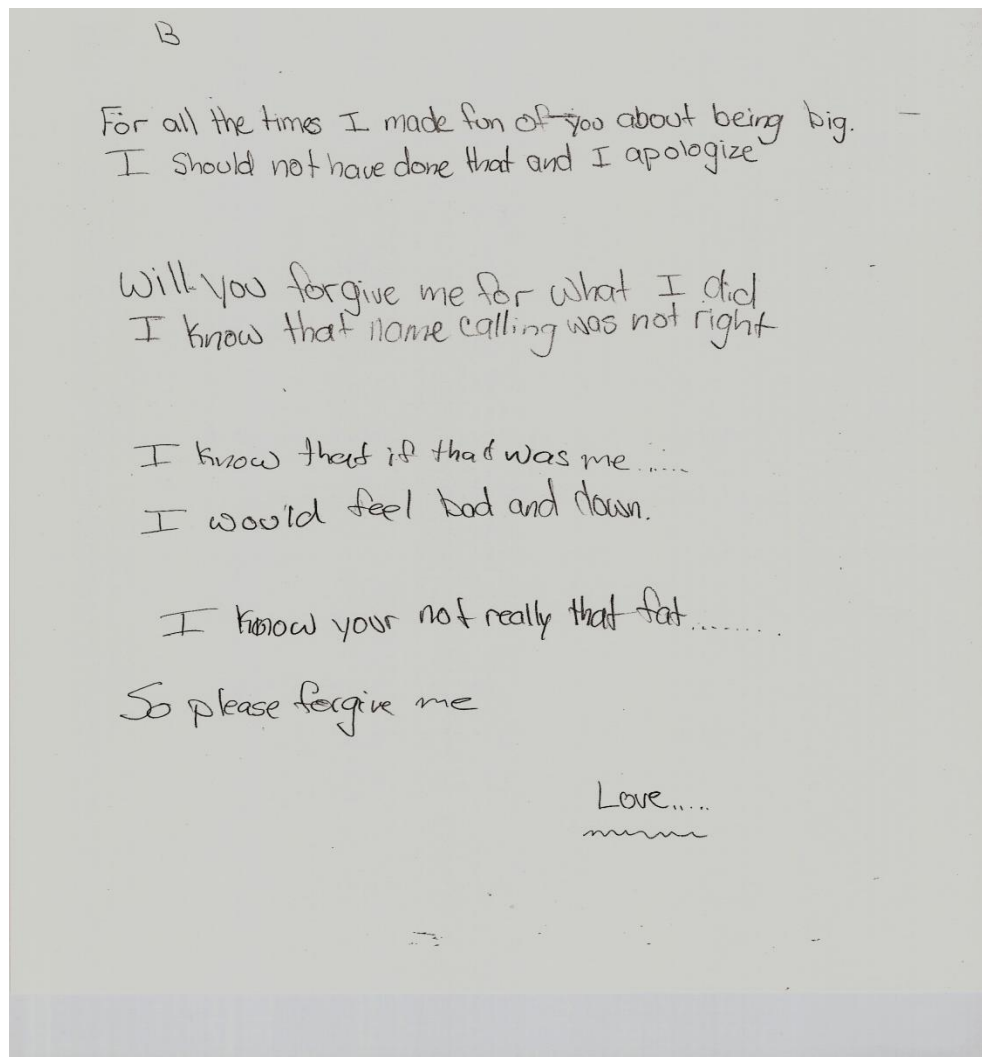


Figure 8. Forgiveness poetry sample.

On Day 11, *The Misfits* (Howe, 2001) was introduced. *The Misfits* is a chapter book whose storyline culminates many of the concepts we had been exploring through small group discussion, role play, writings, film, and short text. The main characters in the book are four students who have been bullied and are outcasts from a mainstream middle school/high school setting due to weight, sexual orientation, gender, intelligence, and socioeconomic reasons. The content of *The Misfits* questioned bullying behaviors and responses. The lessons continued to be infused with critical literacy practices. My goal for bringing in a chapter book was to give students a more extensive opportunity with text, to go deeper in one work. Because of the limitation of copies, some read aloud had to take place, but time was spent stopping for both whole group and small group discussion. Mrs. Smith and I had originally reserved five days to move through the book. We anticipated that would be a rather quick pace, but one that could be accomplished. The first day of reading aloud and discussing the text was a surprise. Students did not participate in the discussion. They did not follow along in the text. On several occasions I had to prompt students to where we were in the text. Given time to write personal responses after the reading, not one student wrote a connection to the text. Only three responses were written at all. All three written responses were inquiring about how many days we were going to spend on the book and activities and when we could get back to what we had been doing.

In an attempt to redirect the activity, the next chapter in the book was assigned as homework to be read before Day 12 so that we would not have to spend class time reading in a traditional sense, but move to a discussion or interactive model once text had been read outside of class. Only two students reported reading the text on Day 12. After a

lengthy discussion with Mrs. Smith regarding our observations about student participation, interest, and the goal of the study, we decided to abandon *The Misfits* and redirect the remaining days back to what the students had connected with. Since personal connection and student input were two important components we were looking for during the bullying unit building up to the social action project, we felt that returning to the *Odd Girl Out* (McLoughlin, 2005) film would be the best decision on keeping with the framework and spirit of the study. We also agreed that this decision would reinforce to students that we valued their voice, learning styles, and interests.

### *Summary*

As students began to interrogate bullying through critical literacy practices that challenged the everyday status quo world of school bullying, Mrs. Smith's seventh grade class' first step was to define bullying and move past the need to automatically blame the victim. Just as the students struggled in the beginning to identify bullying roles, types of bullies, and develop appropriate and realistic responses to bullying, the adults in the setting struggled with identifying bullies, reacting to bullying behaviors, and setting up proactive anti-bullying measures in the school setting. Not only did the lessons yield opportunities for students to question bullying behaviors through a critical lens, the lessons also yielded opportunities for students to connect personally. Students shared their own bullying experiences through discussion, small group activities, and individual writing. The space created in the classroom to allow students to question and voice their own personal connections empowered students to take initiative in driving curriculum choices for the unit.

### *Understanding Bullying by Analyzing Power Relationships*

As discussed in Chapter 2, bullying is a complex web of power relationships. Perpetrators have power over victims. Victims often feel powerless with no positive avenue to gain control of their situation. Bystanders demonstrate no power of assistance, but reinforce the status quo by turning the other way or feeling powerless themselves to make a difference. Allies are individuals who are trying to regain power from a bully in order to empower a victim. It is important for students to explore the power relationships of bullying behaviors and contemplate actions in which power shifts and dynamics change both in positive and negative ways.

### *Exploring Power Relationships*

On Day 4, following the Day 3 lesson with *Just One Flick of a Finger* (Lorbiecki, 1996), the term “power relationship” was introduced by the teacher. The following dialogue is a portion of the dialogue between Mrs. Smith and the students.

[9] Mrs. Smith: Today our focus is power relationships. What are relationships?

[10] Jim: Between two people

[11] Mrs. Smith: OK...maybe, can you give me an example?

[12] Jim: Friendship

[13] Sara: boyfriend/girlfriend

[14] Jamal: parent and child

[15] Amy: siblings

[16] Mrs. Smith: Yesterday’s story had relationships. Can you identify those relationships?

[18] Jim: Sherms was an ally. The main character was the target. Rebo was the bully. Other students and the teacher were the bystanders.

[19] Tony: Aren't there love/hate relationships?

[20] Mrs. Smith: Absolutely. Where you love somebody, but you hate them too.

[21] Shelly: Like me and my brother.

[22] Joe: I only get to see my sister only two days out of the year and when I see her I just want to hold on to her for a long time.

[24] Mrs. Smith: I can understand that. We are going to talk about power relationships and you will be working into groups. In any type of relationships, someone always has some authority over others. It can be shared and shift. In a teacher/student relationship, who has the power?

[28] Shelly: The student.

[29] Several students respond aloud "student"

[30] Mrs. Smith: Why student?

[31] Amy: Because if the student wasn't there you wouldn't have a job. There would be no one to teach.

[32] Mrs. Smith: That's one perspective.

[33] Tina: The students have the power because they decide if they are going to do what the teachers say to do.

[35] Mrs. Smith: Does anyone think the teacher has the power?  
(several students raise their hands)

[36] Mrs. Smith: Why the teacher?

[37] John: Because they're the adult.

[38] Gina: Teachers can use the rules. The teacher can say 'go to the principal's office'...it's not like we can say 'go to the principal's office'.

[40] John: The teacher always wins.

[41] Tiffany: The teacher has the power cause they teach.

[42] Mrs. Smith: So the teacher has the power because they have the knowledge and information to teach the student.

In the last part of this dialogue, Tiffany does not say that teachers are qualified to impart knowledge and so they teach. Tiffany says that teachers are in a position of power. Tiffany's response is directed to John, whose comment is that teachers always 'win', not that they are always 'right'. At first glance to Mrs. Smith's response to Tiffany, it appears as though Mrs. Smith is repeating and reinforcing Tiffany's sentiment. However, Mrs. Smith is actually altering Tiffany's position and imposing the traditional discourse of education and teachers into the thought by imposing her perspective of teaching which is to impart knowledge and information onto students versus Tiffany's perspective of teaching which is to have power over others.

Students were then asked to read and discuss six bullying scenarios within a small group of four to five classmates (<http://www.stopbullyingnow.harsa.gov/>). Students were asked to rate the level of seriousness from minor to extremely serious on a 1 to 5 likert scale. Students were then asked to identify the main problem and who controlled the power in each of the scenarios. As a final step, students were asked to brainstorm possible ways the situation might be resolved and circle which option they felt was most viable. The sample in Figures 7 and 8 show Group 1's responses. It is interesting to note in the student example that the group has made distinctions in regards to seriousness of the bullying event. The group evaluates the scenarios on a range from 2 to 5 (5 being the most severe bullying situation). The group does not rank any of the scenarios as a 1 (minor) or 0 (not sure). This sample was reflective of the work done by the other five groups working on the identical activity. While the students saw a range of severity in bullying scenarios as displayed in Figures 9 and 10, Figures 11 and 12, also completed by Group 1 as they brainstormed possible actions shifting power away from a bully, shows a

limited range of strategies or actions students feel empowered to make. The brainstormed possibilities are repetitive and frequently refer to law enforcement/police intervention.

**Scenario 1**

Mary is often teased by other girls about the clothes she wears. They snigger when she walks past and at times they make derogatory comments that are just loud enough for her to hear. Mary is hurt by their actions but tries to ignore them.

**Level of Seriousness**

Not sure	minor		serious		extremely serious
0	1	(2)	3	4	5

**Scenario 2**

Dan enjoys classroom activities and discussions and has always liked coming to school. Recently his attendance at school has been poor. Tom, another student in class and his mates, have been demanding money from Dan. If the money is not forthcoming, Tom punches, abuses and assaults Dan and threatens him with further aggression from them all.

**Level of Seriousness**

Not sure	minor		serious		extremely serious
0	1	2	3	(4)	5

**Scenario 3**

Hannah has been the subject of vicious rumours that she finds extremely distressing. They are usually spread by a group of five girls. The rumours focus on Hannah's alleged encounters with the boyfriends of other girls.

**Level of Seriousness**

Not sure	minor		serious		extremely serious
0	1	2	(3)	4	5

**Scenario 4**

Mr Jones has been a teacher at the school for a long time. His classes are run very strictly. He yells and uses intimidation as a means of controlling the class. None of the students like coming to the class and will often just 'wag' it if they can. There have been requests for class transfers.

**Level of Seriousness**

Not sure	minor		serious		extremely serious
0	1	2	3	(4)	5

Figure 9. Scenario sheet front side completed by Group 1.



On numerous occasions Scott opens his locker to find things missing or damaged. His padlock has been continuously destroyed. At PE sessions his bag is often ransacked and his lunch is strewn aside. These things increased after he reported his suspicions as to who was responsible for the actions. Now he just cleans up the mess and puts up with it.

#### Level of Seriousness

Not sure	minor		serious		extremely serious
0	1	2	3	4	5

#### Scenario 6

Gina is in your class and you have noticed that she started to sit by herself and not talk to her friends. When you ask her if she is all right, she tells you that her friends are giving her a hard time about her weight and are always talking about her behind her back.

#### Level of Seriousness

Not sure	minor		serious		extremely serious
0	1	2	3	4	5

Figure 10. Scenario sheet back side completed by Group 1.

### Bullying Scenarios

- Directions:
1. Imagine yourself in the 6 bullying situations.
  2. Identify the problem and who has the power in the relationship.
  3. Determine the level of seriousness by circling a number
  4. Brainstorm ways of solving the problem by listing options based on the seriousness of the situation.
  5. Circle the BEST option that is appropriate, realistic, and has a positive outcome.

What is the problem? Who has the power?	Ways of solving the problem. Circle the BEST option.
<b>Scenario 1</b> Mary is being teased The "teasers" have the power.	1. Call the police 2. Tell teachers and/or parents
<b>Scenario 2</b> Dan is being seriously teased by other students. The people demanding the money have the power.	1. Call the police 2. try to forget about it
<b>Scenario 3</b> Rumors are being spread about Nathan. The 5 girls have the power.	1. Tell the principal 2. Call the cops
<b>Scenario 4</b> A teacher is intimidating students. The students have the power.	1. Tell the principal 2. Call police
<b>Scenario 5</b> Scott's locker is being broken into. Scott has the power.	1. Tell the Rescuer officer 2. Tell the teacher

Figure 11. Student response graphic organizer front side completed by Group 1.

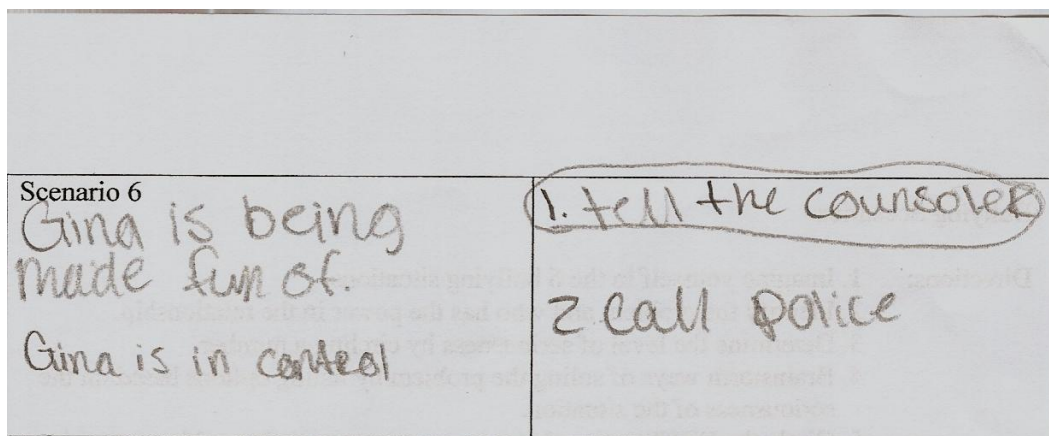


Figure 12. Student response graphic organizer back side completed by Group 1.

In the above samples students are able to identify hierarchies of power and possibilities for assistance. The realities of those answers will be addressed in the later section on multiple realities.

### *Power Shifts*

Students were asked not only to identify power relationships, but also to explore how power can be shifted within those relationships. Mrs. Smith led a discussion utilizing *Just One Flick of a Finger* (Lorbiecki, 1996). During the discussion, Mrs. Smith highlighted the action of the main character using a gun to shift power away from a bully as a shift in power through negative means (a “negative shift”) versus a bystander and ally standing united and vowing to not fight violence with violence (a “positive shift”). The class was divided into four groups and worked together to reflect on the varying types of bullies, and possible ways to shift power in a positive way depending on how the bullying behaviors are manifested. I was surprised by some of the responses students generated. Student responses are aggregated and represented in Table 5.

After reading the responses I questioned if some groups had taken the lesson seriously or if they had truly generated honest suggestions from their perspectives and understandings. For example, Group 1’s response for a sexual bully to redirect their

power was to get an “inflatable buddy”. I was unsure if this was an opportunity to see what type of reaction they might generate from their teacher, testing the waters of open communication and conversation. I was also still surprised that even after further discussion led by the teacher and further discussion among their peers that Group 4 still appeared “stuck” in their reaction to call the police 4 out of 6 times. Group 4 also expressed bullying back as an avenue toward a positive power shift from physical bullies. Group 2’s response to sexual bullies involving “tell them to stop quietly in a kind voice” was disturbing to me. Only one “Don’t Know” response was given. It was reported by Group 3 regarding sexual bullying.

Mrs. Smith and I discussed the responses and the videotape of the lesson was reviewed. Both Mrs. Smith and I circulated throughout the room listening to group discussions and making ourselves available for questions. There were no visible signs of students being off task, showing off, or “horsing around”. Our on-site observations were affirmed through the videotape. Student groups appeared on task and seriously engaged in discussion. Therefore, I interpreted student responses detailed in Table 6 as their authentic responses given the knowledge they currently had.

Table 6. Aggregated data for type of bully power shift graphic organizer.

Type of Bully	What are some possible actions which could shift power form this type of bully in a positive way?
1. Physical Bully -hitting, kicking, taking or damaging property	(Gp 1)Redirect aggression in sports * (Gp 2)Talk it out, bring a friend (Gp 3)Get tired of it (Gp 4) Bully back
2. Verbal Bully -use language to hurt or degrade others	(Gp 1)Write their thoughts down* (Gp 2)Talk it out (Gp 3)Tell them something about them that is good (Gp 4) Make them feel how it feels, call the police
3. Technological Bully -bullies who use technology to shield identities and send out information in mass. Use blogs, email, text messages, websites to bully through images, language	(Gp 1)Say things in a nicer way* (Gp 2)Report spam, Block Buddy, tell parent, tell Microsoft (Gp 3)Don't care about it (Gp 4) Call the police, change your website and cell phone number
4. Sexual Bully -unwelcome repeated physical or verbal assaults in a sexual manner (ex: pinching, grabbing, referring to someone's private areas)	(Gp 1)Get an inflatable buddy* (Gp 2)Tell teacher, tell them to stop quietly in a kind voice (Gp 3)Don't know (Gp 4) Call the police, tell your parents
5. Relational/Social Bully -strong members of a peer group who persuade peers to reject a person or group of people, cutting victims off from social interactions	(Gp 1)No positive way to look at it* (Gp 2)Stick up to them (Gp 3)Tell them that they are good (Gp 4) Call the police (domestic violence)
6. Reactionary Bully -at first they appear to be a victim of bullies, but often instigate, tease, or taunt bullies. Begin by using self-defense, but end up bullying others.	(Gp 1)Express anger in a different way* (Gp 2)Jump in, tell an adult, calm it down quietly (Gp 3)They could use self-defense for good Reasons (Gp 4)Go to the counselor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group One looked at the assignment as changes the bully can make which would positively shift the bully's behavior, while the other groups took the perspective of targets taking action causing a positive shift in power.</li> </ul>	

The writing sample in Figure 13 took place during the Forgiveness Poetry lesson, which was several lessons further in the unit from the activity just discussed in Table 6. The poetry sample is written by a girl who is working to sort out ways she will shift the power from bullies by countering the negative things she witnesses being said to a target. The poem begins in the first stanza by acknowledging the bullying situation that she has witnessed, “I see them and you. Them feeling strong. You feeling wrong”. The first stanza ends with the writer expressing empathy toward a victim she sees but appears to be removed from. This empathy is expressed in the lines “But I feel you, sad and blue.” In the second stanza the author compares and contrasts the two groups: 1) the victim: interested in drawing, writing stories, 2) the bullies: interested in girls and boys. Stanza 3 reinforces the author’s position that the bullying is a negative behavior that is “mean and [im]polite. The fourth and final stanza is where the writer expresses her plan to take action and become an ally through positive reinforcement to the victim, “I will comment you on the way you look, In good ways, and on your books.” The author’s plan has a second step which involves direct confrontation of the bullies, “I will tell them that is wrong, And it’s mean...” The author completes the poem by explicitly stating the shift in power she hopes her plan of action will initiate, “and now you’re strong.”



## Girl

I see them and you,  
Them feeling strong,  
You feeling wrong,  
They say you're big,  
Or you look like a pig,  
But I feel you,  
Sad and Blue,

I see you interests,  
Drawing, writing stories,  
Well theirs are girls and boys,  
You have your style and they have theirs,

I see them making fun of you,  
By the way you dress and pigtails too,  
I ~~do not~~ think that is cool and right,  
I think they are mean and polite,

I will comment you on the way you look,  
In good ways and on your books,  
I will tell them that is wrong,  
And it's mean and now you're strong

Figure 13. Student poem with elements of power shift.

### *Summary*

In exploring power relationships and power shifts in bullying behaviors, Mrs. Smith's students began with a narrow scope of strategies and responses to bullying that often relied on law enforcement or "unrealistic" possibilities (inflatable dolls) for middle school students or for the given situation. While students showed opinions about degrees of severity in bullying scenarios, the degree of response to the types of bullying displayed appeared equal (consistent reliance on calling the police). However, as evidenced in the student poem sample in Figure 13 and in the data which will be outlined in Chapter 5 regarding the social action project, a majority of students were able to develop and grow beyond their initial understanding of power relationships and power shifts.

### *Viewing Bullying from Multiple Perspectives and Realities*

Viewing bullying from multiple perspectives and realities gives students the opportunities to put themselves in someone else's shoes which may build tolerance and empathy. As described in the early section about power relationships and shifts, Mrs. Smith's students required further exploration about potential actions/reactions against bullying behaviors. Focusing on the students viewing these scenarios from multiple perspectives gave students additional opportunities to wrestle and work through some of their struggles in determining what things they could do about bullying at their school. Additionally, students continued to voice their own perspectives in class discussions, activities, and through their writing.

### *What Should We Do?*

Referring back to the exercise on Day 5 where students were asked to review bullying scenarios, assess the severity of the situation, and brainstorm possible



resolutions (Figures 9-12 and Table 6), the figures provide an example of trends in students struggling with realistic resolutions. Even when students deemed the situation minor, as in the first scenario where someone is being teased about the clothes they wear, students determine that calling the police is an appropriate possibility.

Since this was a patterned response among all groups, not just the example given here, Mrs. Smith and I decided to conduct a follow-up discussion on their perspectives of what are real and appropriate actions. A graphic organizer was designed to lead the discussion. Mrs. Smith used the overhead and transparency to record student input. Power relationships and power shifts were reviewed prior to the discussion. We asked students to explore different levels of power: yourself, friends/peers, parents, teachers/school counselors, school administrators, police, law. We asked students to explore the different perspectives of each level, stepping into each role and asking when students might and should involve each level and how each level impacts them. In Table 6, students explore how their own actions and choices have some responsibility in bullying outcomes. They see how peers can be both allies and bystanders and whose influence impact their decisions and perspectives. Students were able to view multiple roles from a parent's perspective including that of role model, advocate, advisor, and disciplinarian. The perspectives about teachers were also multifaceted and ranged between confidant and someone who talks too much and can make bullying situations worse. The conversation from administration, police, and law shifted to that of rules and guidelines. Students were able to define the role and realities for administration and police. The teacher introduced the Anti-Bully Law and explained the concept of mandating bully prevention and intervention within school systems. The discussion that

followed was spirited and the students with quick solidarity rejected the probability of positive influence or success of an anti-bully law. Mrs. Smith diverted from the graphic organizer at that point and asked students to discuss what will stop bullying at their school. The following discussion occurred:

[78] Mrs. Smith: If an anti-bully law won't stop bullying at our school, what will?

[79] Jim: I don't know, but teachers would have to be watching what's going on a lot more. I don't think a law can make that happen.

[81] Mrs. Smith: So, from your perspective, teachers need to supervise more.

[82] Andy: Why would someone think that if you just tell someone not to do something and say there is a law for it, that they won't do it. We already have been told not to do it.

[85] Mrs. Smith: Thank you for sharing your perspective. I think that is an interesting point. So if you tell them and they won't, then what?

[87] Andy: You really have to convince someone and they have to make the change because they want to.

Semiotic building. The system of legislation is being questioned in this dialogue. The students are challenging the authority of the law. The question the students pose is why a law telling them not to bully would be any different than what they have already been told. Telling students not to bully has not prevented bullying at their school.

Political building. Literally, the political role of legislating behaviors is challenged in conjunction with the amount of power a person, school, or law can have over another's behavior or will to bully.

Socioculturally-situated identity relationship building. Rather than looking to outside mandated motivators to stop bullying behaviors in schools (law, rules), Andy in line 87 turns toward intrinsic motivation as a driving force in preventing bullying

behaviors. In their experiences, extrinsic motivators have not made a significant impact on bullying in their school, but creating change within the hearts and minds of students may have a greater impact on seeing bullying diminish.

Figure 14 is the transparency used by the teacher in guiding the discussion about the authority or power individuals or group display. The discussion was guided by three beginning questions: 1) What do each of these levels control (in terms of bullying)? 2) When do you involve each level? 3) How do/can these levels impact you?

It is interesting to note that all adult roles discussed (parents, teachers/school counselors, school administrators, police, and law) all had mixed responses including negative and positive impacts. For example, teachers were seen as confidants and advisors, but were also seen as adults who can make bullying situations worse and talk too much in place of action. Examining the impact of friends/peers and themselves, a mostly positive picture was portrayed. Friends were seen as allies to be trusted and bystanders who can influence the decisions of bullies. They saw themselves as empowered in taking action and making their own choices that influence outcomes depending on their level of responsibility in their behaviors. This perspective of peers and self shows a potential shift in their understanding and awareness of the potential impact their actions may have on bullying versus the earlier reliance on outside adult intervention (calling the police) from the earlier activities and discussion.

There are levels of power.

What do each of these levels control (in terms of bullying)?

When do you involve each level?

How do/can these levels impact you?

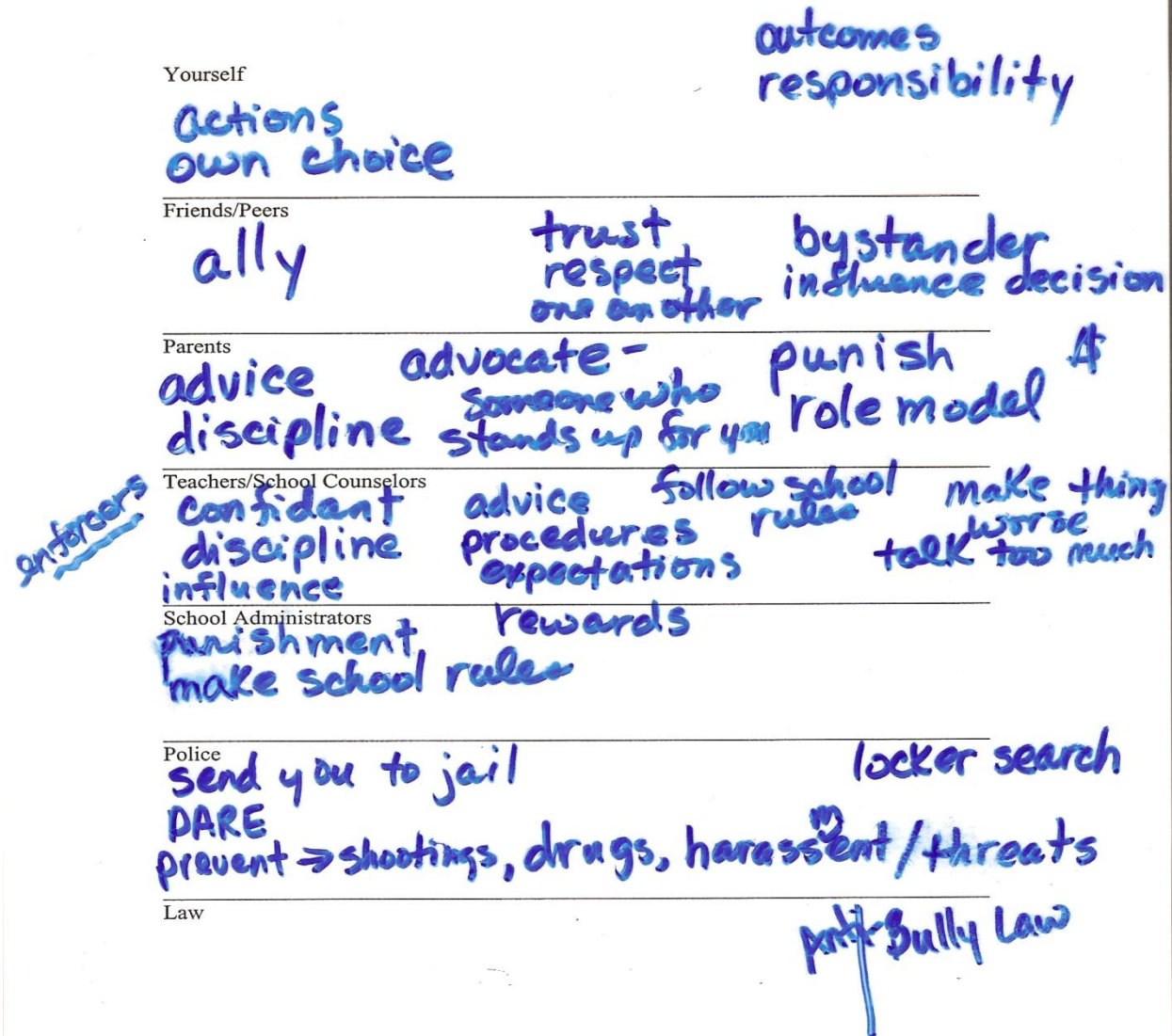


Figure 14. Levels of power graphic organizer for whole class discussion.

### *Voicing Own Perspectives*

Students consistently voiced their own perspectives through discussion and writing. Again, students often personalized with content and began to visualize themselves in others' shoes. Figure 15 is a journal entry written by a boy after reading the Music Lesson (described earlier in this chapter). His writing demonstrates visualizing of and empathizing with the victim. This willingness to see from another perspective inspires the desire for action and equity later in the entry. The writing sample in Figure 15 is a common response given by students and one that was frequently repeated throughout the students' writing for this assignment.

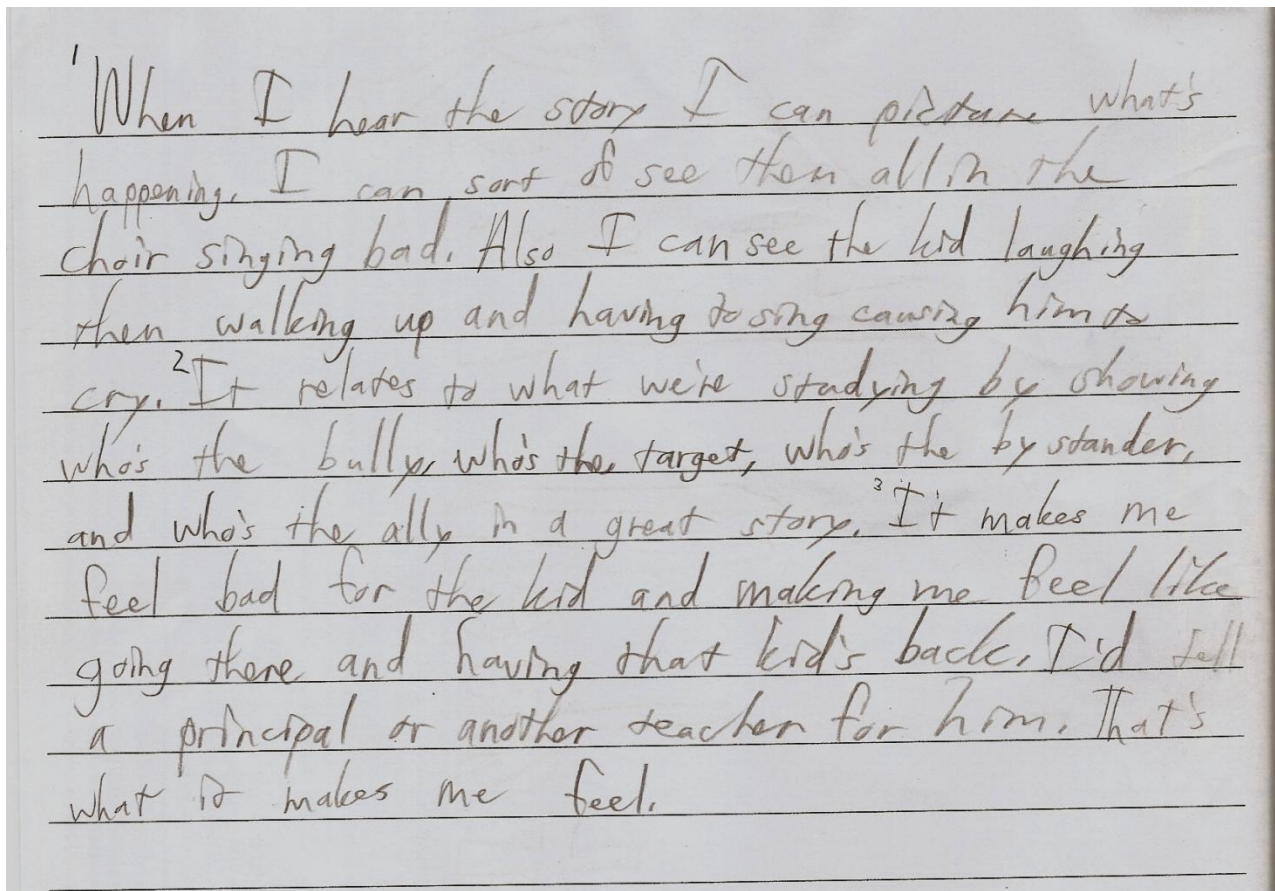


Figure 15. Music Lesson journal entry demonstrating perspective.

The writer in Figure 15 is able to visualize the perspective of a student in the story. For example, “When I hear the story I can picture what’s happening. I can sort of see them all in the choir singing bad. Also I can see the kid laughing then walking up and having to sing causing him to cry.” Emotions are evoked and sympathy is expressed, “It makes me feel bad for the kid.” It also evokes a sense of advocacy where the writer is inspired to act, “making me feel like going there and having that kid’s back. I’d tell a principal or another teacher for him.”

On Day 7, students brainstormed stereotypes which are often viewed as characteristics to target from a bully’s perspective. Students were able to generate the following list: race, religion, poor, gender, special needs including speech impediments to mental retardation, appearance including weight and height, lack of abilities including sports and dancing, sexual orientation, and family life including homosexual parents, divorce, and foster care. During this discussion on stereotypes, students investigated stereotypical beliefs they may have imbedded in their own perspectives about who is an easy or frequented target. Once these perspectives were brought to the surface, they were challenged as students talked about how some of the stereotypes seem almost socially “acceptable” to bully and how their own beliefs and actions could perpetuate or change those stereotypes. For example of a socially “acceptable” relational bullying behavior given by a male student, an overweight girl should realize the choice in what she eats isolates her and that boys might not want to dance with her at school dances. A female classmate challenged this perspective by stating that the girl’s weight may not be in her control or that maybe the reason she eats is because everyone is pushing her away and she doesn’t have anything else to do.

In another example taken from the students' Forgiveness Poems (Christensen, 2000), a boy works through his own situations as a victim. In his writing, he separates out the components of his story, making decisions on his process of dealing with the issues he has faced. From this student's perspective, his forgiveness is not 'all or nothing'.

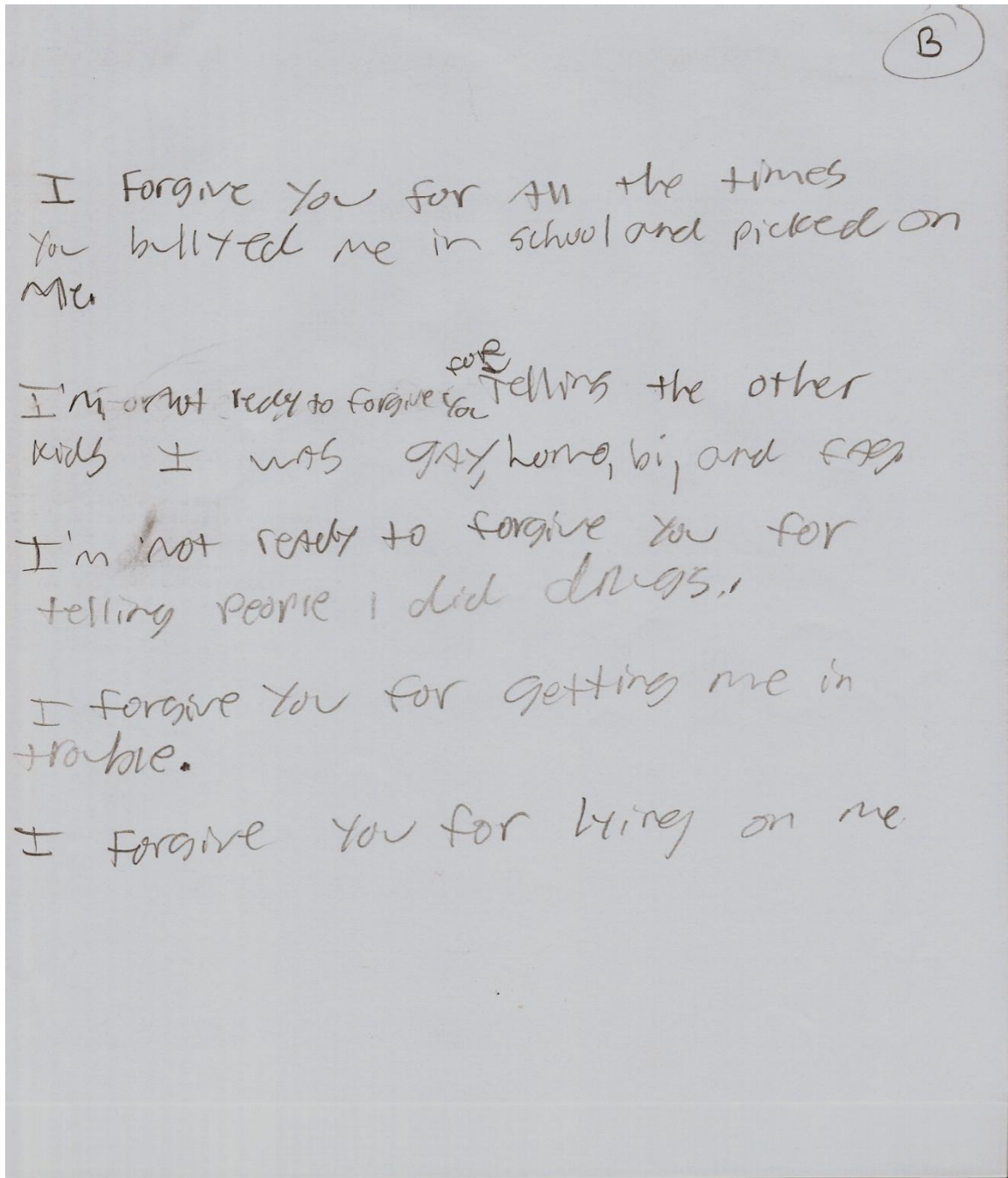


Figure 16. Forgiveness poem demonstrating process and perspectives.



The male writer in Figure 16 chooses to forgive students on a selective basis. He forgives his bully “for all the times you bullied me in school and picked on me” and “for getting me in trouble” and “for lying on me.” However, he is not ready to forgive “for telling the other kids I was gay, homo, bi, and fag” and “for telling people I did drugs.” The student appears to have created a hierarchy of offenses and the depth to which the offenses hurt him. Picking on, lying, getting him in trouble seem to be lesser offenses that he is ready to move on from. However, questioning his sexual orientation and telling others he did drugs have cut his emotions to a place that is still tender and raw.

### *Summary*

Mrs. Smith’s students viewed bullying from multiple perspectives as they brainstormed and reflected on responses to bullying behaviors. Students also questioned the perspectives of legislatures and adults in developing anti-bullying measures. Mrs. Smith’s students began to gain perspective of their own power through the choice of their actions. Students were able to visualize themselves in the shoes of others in bullying scenarios and share their own perspectives regarding their personal bullying experiences.

### *Analyzing How Bullying is Portrayed in Popular Culture and Media*

In a world that inundates all of us with cultural and media messages, adolescents need opportunities to investigate and analyze those messages and the potential influence and impact they have on student beliefs and understanding about bullying. Students explored the role of gender in bullying behaviors and began their own exploration of social action through a documentary of middle school students initiating action in their school and community on a sociopolitical topic.



### *Gender and Bullying*

On Day 9, the students viewed the first 40 minutes of the film *Odd Girl Out* (McLoughlin, 2005). This film is about a group of middle school girls who terrorize a former friend through a variety of bullying behaviors including relational isolation and cyberbullying. The clip on this day ended at a key scene where one of the families is gathered around the dinner table discussing the situation rather nonchalantly. The father than gSmith a piece of advise to the girl's younger brother as he explains the difference between girls and boys. The dad explains that girls are vicious and carry grudges that far surpass reason, while boys just punch each other and then the problem is over. After viewing this portion of the film, students were asked to complete a Venn diagram (see Figure 17) using their own background knowledge and perspectives to compare and contrast gender roles and the impact on bullying behaviors. Figure 17 is a common reflection of the graphic organizers completed by students in Mrs. Smith's class.

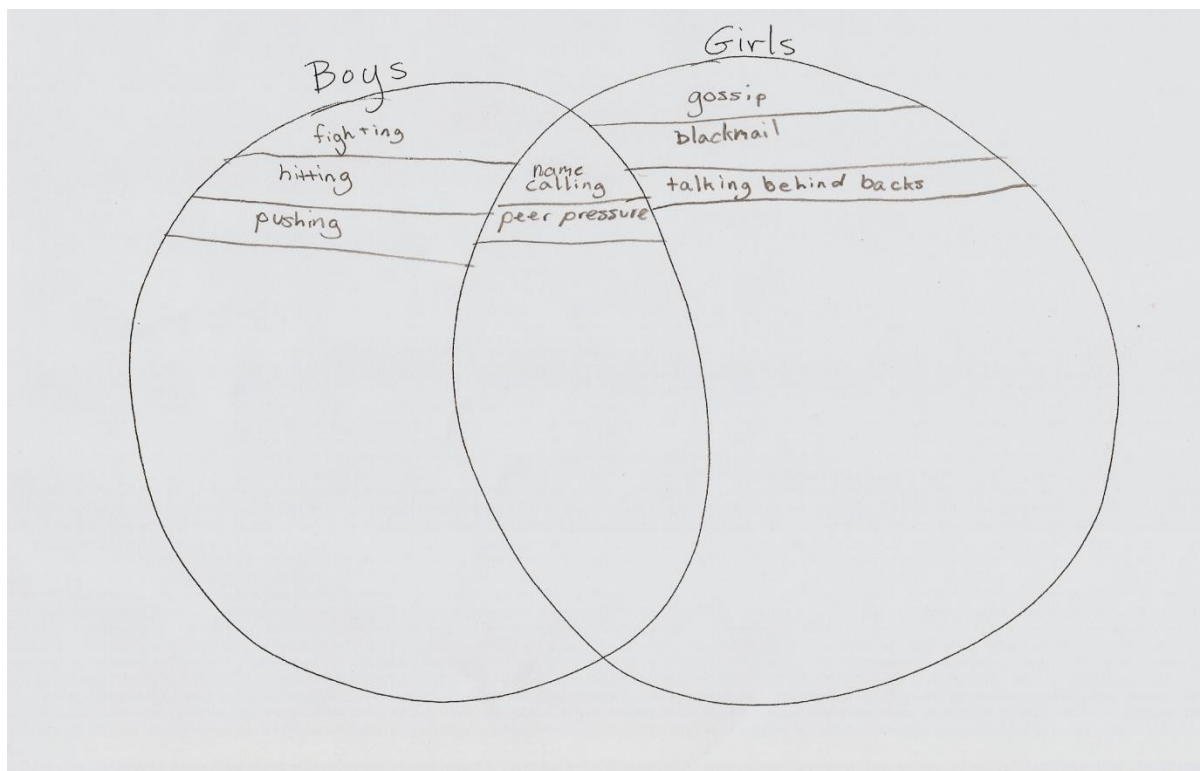


Figure 17. Venn diagram for gender differences in bullying behaviors.

After students had time to complete their Venn diagrams, a whole class discussion took place where students were asked to discuss their perspectives and to what extent they felt the film accurately portrayed girl bullying behaviors. The following is a portion of the dialogue that occurred. In this transcript, I identify myself as Reed:

[13] Reed: So guys, what do you think about the way the girls are behaving in the film? Do you think that is accurate...what you see here at school?

[15] Andy: I think that's true. Girls are a lot tougher on each other than guys are.

[16] Reed: What do you mean by "tougher"?

[17] Andy: I mean...they just keep going and going. Once they get mad at each other, it's like they can never be friends again.

[19] Shanda: I don't think that's true. We just don't let people walk all over us. If I have a problem with another girl, I'm not gonna pretend like I don't.

[21] Andy: OK, but then all the other girls have to get in on it too.

[22] Reed: So, girls what do you think about what the dad said in the film...about boys just punching each other and getting over it?

[24] Claire: I think that's probably true. But I've seen some girls who like to fight too. Not just with words, but with punching and slapping.

[26] Jim: I think it takes a lot for a guy to get mad enough to hit someone.

[27] Reed: Then are you saying that girls have a shorter fuse?

[28] Jim: Yeah, I guess so. It seems like some girls just are always looking to fight. It doesn't matter what you say or do, they just want to act that way...like it's fun.

Originally, it was not part of my advanced planning to show the entire film.

Instead, I had planned for this lesson to be a segue into *The Misfits* (Howe, 2001) lessons.

However, after reflecting on those first two lessons utilizing *The Misfits*, which I discussed earlier in this chapter, plans were changed. For two days after students continued to ask if and when we would be returning to the *Odd Girl Out* (McLoughlin, 2005) film. On the second day as a student was coming into class I had the following informal conversation with a student:

[1] Tisha: Mrs. Reed, are we going to finish that one film today?

[2] Reed: *Odd Girl Out*?

[3] Tisha: Yeah.

[4] Reed: No, I have some other things planned.

[5] Tisha: So when are we going to?

[6] Reed: Tell me something. Why do you guys really want to finish that film? Do you just like watching movies in class, or what?

[8] Tisha: No. We want to know what happens to that girl. We want to know if she is ever going to do anything that fixes it with the bullies or if those grown-ups are ever going to figure it out.

Activity building. In the curriculum, I was moving on to traditional text by

planning to read *The Misfits*. However, Mrs. Smith's students were more connected to the film. Perhaps students were connected to the media experience (as probed by my question in lines 6 and 7). But Tisha's response in line 8 suggests a connection to the content beyond the media it being delivered in.

Connection building. Students had been engaged with the activities and lessons up to this point in the unit. I did not want to continue down my predetermined path and break the connection that seemed to be threading through the activities that had built up to this point.

World building. Tisha expressed the students' desire to know that happens in the film. Beyond even knowing what happens, the curiosity extends to finding out what action the main character may exhibit which may alter the outcomes of the scenario and what role the adults in the film play and how those actions or lack of action impacts the situation.

When plans were made to halt the lessons utilizing *The Misfits*, students completed the film in its place. Further discussion on gender will be included in Chapter 5 during the reporting of the social action project data.

#### *Social Action Documentary*

Prior to planning their own social action project, students were asked to view the documentary *Paper Clips* (Weinstein, Weinstein, & Berlin, 2004). *Paper Clips* is a film about middle school children who studied the Holocaust and created a social action project which included collecting paperclips, one for each person who perished in concentration camps during WWII.

I was unsure how the students would process the film. The reaction to the first two films had been somewhat surprising and mixed. The lack of connection that seemed to occur after viewing *Let's Get Real* (Cohen & Chasnoff, 2004), as discussed early in this chapter, was surprising. The strong connection to the fictional film *Odd Girl Out* (McLoughlin, 2005) which students insisted on completing and revisiting was equally surprising. I had anticipated a lack of connection to film in class based on the first experience with *Let's Get Real*.

The reaction to *Paper Clips* (Weinstein et al., 2004) was mixed. Approximately half of the students took the documentary literally and thought our project would be collecting paper clips. The other half were able to see the analogy and realize that they had not studied the Holocaust, nor were they being asked to collect paper clips. This half understood that since we had studied bullying, that they would need to create something that addressed and made sense for bullying at their school. While this was discussed prior to viewing the film, it was clarified countless times by both Mrs. Smith and myself over the course of planning their own social action project. After reviewing the videotapes of the discussion, I was not able to find any indication of why students came to the conclusion that they were to collect paper clips. This is an unresolved portion of my data.

Further data and discussion regarding the students' connection to media is included in Chapter 5 during the discussion, planning and implementation of the student's social action project addressing bullying within their school environment.

### *Summary*

Mrs. Smith's class compared and contrasted gender roles in bullying scenarios. They also made a strong connection to the fictional film, *Odd Girl Out*. However,

students struggled with a documentary film depicting middle school students engaged in social action. This mirrors the lack of connection and appearance of reflective thinking in viewing the documentary film *Let's Get Real* that kicked off data collection in this dissertation.

### *Chapter Summary*

The seventh grade students in Mrs. Smith's class interrogated bullying by disrupting the everyday world by questioning what bullying really is, exploring blame, determining where to begin in their exploration of bullying, and finding a space to personally connect and share their experiences. Students exhibited understanding bullying by analyzing power relationships and actions which shift the power in bullying scenarios with negative or positive implications. Mrs. Smith's class viewed bullying from multiple perspectives and realities in determining what actions and choices are made within bullying roles and by interrogating their own voiced perspectives. By analyzing how bullying is portrayed in popular culture and media, students were able to compare and contrast gender behaviors in bullying situations and further their journey into social action by examining middle school students documented performing action pertaining to a sociopolitical topic in a community.

## Chapter 5

### Social Action Results

As outlined in Chapter 4, seventh grade students at MC Middle School were taken on a journey exploring bullying behaviors and issues via critical literacy principles. In addition to providing opportunities for children to question the world around them and power relationships, view from multiple perspectives, and analyze popular media, opportunities were also provided for children to move toward social action. These components of, along with the theoretical perspective of, critical literacy are detailed in Chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation. In this Chapter I will specifically address the results of a student created and implemented social action project regarding bullying. I outline the decision making process in choosing a social action project and audience, the project itself, and immediate feedback of audience and performing groups.

#### *Decision Making*

During the design and creation portion of the social action project, students had many decisions to make. In this section I track the students' journey in choosing an audience for their project, the decisions made in determining what the project would be, modifications to the audience, and the order of the presentation itself.

#### *Choosing an Audience*

On Day 15 (see Appendix) of the study, I led a discussion with the students about applying what they had learned toward a social action project. I asked the students to brainstorm ways that they could take what they had learned and increase bullying awareness in their school. The first step in preparation was to decide the audience that they wanted to target. The following audiences were identified as possibilities and the

rationale behind each option: sixth graders because they would be in the seventh grade position next year, fifth grade elementary students since they would be making the transition to middle school the next year, teachers because they need more information about what students are really experiencing, other seventh graders because it is not enough for just part of the whole seventh grade to have the information learned.

The students participating in this study came to a quick consensus that fifth grade students were the best target audience. They decided that fifth grade students who would be entering middle school should know about the effects of bullying and the pitfalls of peer pressure to pick on/bully others.

All of the possibilities that students brainstormed were feasible and had a solid rationale behind them. The selection of the fifth grade class may reflect the importance of the transition to middle school and the often stressful situations that can occur socially as well as academically during that period. The selection of fifth graders indicated a desire for students to pass on information they have as “insiders” in the middle school world to incoming “novices.”

### *Choosing a Project*

After identifying an audience, students were then asked to brainstorm ideas for projects. Students brainstormed the following ideas: powerpoint presentation, rap song, play, posters to hang in the halls, school’s television/Channel One system to show video, pep rally, presentation for local community access television channel. Originally, I had the vision for students to decide on one project and divide up the responsibilities to bring the single project into fruition. However, when I prompted students to choose the project they would most like to work on, the students understood that to mean that there could be



several projects building into one goal. Specifically, students determined that a rap video, a pamphlet, a skit, and powerpoint would all be created as aspects of a presentation that would be delivered to fifth graders. The students waited to decide the order of the components after they were created. This way, they would see what had a natural flow in interest and information. I was rather surprised by the sophistication of the conversation and the methodical way the students approached the process.

The students decided to finalize their opinions by taking a vote with a show of hands for those who agreed on the presentation and project components which would make up the presentation. It was a unanimous vote in favor of their ideas. Once the projects that would be incorporated into the presentation were finalized, students created sign-up sheets for students to volunteer on the project they wanted to work on. Five boys signed up to work on the rap video, five girls signed up to design the skit, five students comprised of both boys and girls signed up to complete the pamphlet, and two girls signed up to create the powerpoint.

The delineation of workers among tasks had an interesting dynamic considering the dispositions that gravitated one another during the sign-up period. The five boys working on the rap video were all extroverts and were characterized as “popular” by Mrs. Smith. Mrs. Smith and I did not observe any discussion or negotiations of who might be included in this group. In respect to all groups, no cap was given for the number of participants that could be involved in any one project. All sign-up sheets were left blank for signatures and did not include any slots or numbers that would imply a minimum, maximum, or ideal number of workers. Ironically, the five girls who comprised the skit group mirrored the sign-up behaviors of the boy rap group. The two girls participating in

the powerpoint group were identified as close friends outside of the classroom by Mrs. Smith. The mixed group of boys and girls signing up to work on the pamphlet participated less during whole class discussions, were characterized as introverts and students who preferred to be alone or who were typically characterized as outliers or outcasts in social settings. After each group met for the first time, they reported the vision they anticipated for their specific project. Interestingly, the pamphlet group decided to write their own personal narratives regarding bullying situations they had connections to, but were adamant that their names were not present.

I found the grouping dynamics to be a bit unsettling. While I believe the students had made some paradigm shifts in their understanding and beliefs about bullying, the social constructs of their world remained intact and affirmed during the social action project. The popular kids teamed together, gender boundaries were typically followed, close friends did not have others included, and the outliers formed a group together and did not seem to pay attention to gender lines at all. I found it particularly interesting that the pamphlet group created such a personal piece for their voice to be explicitly heard and yet their need to remain in the shadows by not including their names still dominated their project.

### *Changing the Audience*

On day 19 (see Appendix) while working on the project planning and information to be included in the project (details of the project and content will be outlined in the next section of this chapter), a concern was raised by the group of boys working on the rap video. The boys wanted to incorporate lyrics about suicide and homosexuality. The boys brought their suggested lyrics to the class as a whole to see if the students felt the lyrics

were appropriate and messages conveyed what they had learned and contemplated. With no formal discussion, the class agreed that they wanted the lyrics to remain the same. Concerns about the lyrics appropriateness for fifth graders were then brought up by students. The following dialogue is the conversation resulting in switching the audience from fifth graders to seventh graders.

[12] John: So what do you guys think?

[13] Lisa: I think it should stay that way and everything, but I don't know if, like, elementary kids really know about this stuff yet or not. Fifth grade is still elementary.

[16] John: Yeah, we were thinking about that.

[17] Lisa: What do you think if we move it to another group. Is that o.k. Mrs. Reed?

[19] Reed: I think it is sensitive to think of your audience. Your audience and the material should match. If you feel your audience and material do not match, I think a change for one or the other is appropriate.

[22] John: We were thinking about just doing it for other seventh graders. If we were old enough to understand and handle stuff, other seventh grade classes should be able to.

[25] Class: Yeah.....sounds good.....(muffled affirmations)

The audience was then changed from fifth graders, to seventh grade students in a music class during the same period of the day. Fifteen seventh graders not in Mrs. Smith's class were invited to participate in this dissertation. Out of the 15 who were audience members, 10 students returned their consent forms to participate in the data collection.

The change in audience shows some insight into the students' hierarchy of priorities. The beginning rationale for audience selection was sound and appeared to be sensitive and compassionate according to the research regarding transition from elementary to middle school (AACAP, 1997). The students showed insight and

sensitivity again by realizing that perhaps the match between audience and content is not a fit. Now the students were faced with a decision. What was the priority of the social action project? They had to decide if the audience was the focus and the content should be changed, or if the content was the focus and the audience needed to be changed. Even though they began with a strong rationale and commitment to the audience, in the end it was the content that proved most important to them and the audience was switched.

### *The Presentation Order*

The students were given from Day 17 to 23 (see Appendix) to work on creating their projects. Students worked in their small groups as Mrs. Smith and I were available and monitored the progress of each group. Involvement from Mrs. Smith and I was limited in terms of content. We became a resource for students to bring their ideas to reality. For example, technical support was given by Mrs. Smith to align the print for the pamphlet and print the pamphlet in color. On Day 23 (see Appendix), students presented their work to the class as a whole. Students then decided the order of the presentation. The order was determined to be: (1) powerpoint presentation, (2) skit, (3) rap video, (4) pamphlet distribution.

The rationale behind the order was that the powerpoint presentation provided foundational information about bullying that was important for students to have prior to exploring bullying in other venues. The skit was performed live and was performed second because the students felt the action of a live skit would pique the audience's interest after a traditional, looking at a screen, listening to information powerpoint presentation. There was some extended discussion about whether the rap video should be last. In terms of "entertainment," some students felt the rap video would be the strongest

finish. Those who had worked on the pamphlet pushed for the pamphlet to be distributed last as the student audience left. This would give them information that would be carried with them. There was also the argument that if you passed out the pamphlet prior to the video that some might read the pamphlet instead of watching the video or some might forget about the pamphlet altogether. Following the pamphlet group's points, the class voted unanimously to have the rap video shown third and the pamphlet to be distributed last as the audience was leaving.

In this scenario, traditional social constructs are again affirmed. The traditional powerpoint is first. While it is sound reasoning that their audience would need to solid information and beginning foundation to build on for the rest of the presentation, it was not the only rationale for the powerpoint to be presented first. It was also seen as the most "boring" or traditional in nature, so therefore, would not be as entertaining and if presented later in the program, might break the entertainment flow of the presentation. The discussion about the presentation order of the pamphlet versus the rap video relates back to the need for anonymity of the pamphlet group. Although it contains a strong rationale that students might forget about the pamphlet or that they might read the pamphlet instead of watching the rap video, the pamphlet group was adamant about not being recognized for the work they accomplished. At one point during the discussion, one pamphlet group member requested that I pass out the pamphlets in place of them, which I declined. These behaviors indicate a reluctance to be acknowledged in front of peers and in connection with personal work they had complete choice in and desired to share.

### *Summary*

Students were able to make sophisticated choices with reasonable rationale in regards to audience selection, projects and content, and presentation. The students worked well in their groups and were able to implement their created projects (discussed in the next section). However, the deeper applications of concepts such as tolerance and exclusion which were addressed during the unit lessons, were not manifested to the degree I had hoped in the selection of group members. I was disappointed to see students still gravitate easily to the social constructs they began with and not venture outside of their comfortable social circles and work habits.

### *The Social Action Project*

In the previous section of this chapter, the decision making process for the component of the social action project was outlined. In this section, each project component which eventually combined to comprise the full presentation is looked at in the order in which they were presented: the powerpoint, the skit, the rap video, and the pamphlet.

### *The Powerpoint*

The two girls collaborating on the powerpoint presentation spent a majority of their workdays researching information on the internet about bullying. They googled and explored several websites. They worked quietly and often chose to work in a back corner of Mrs. Ives' room on a school laptop. The school computers have internet search safeguards installed. While Mrs. Smith and I checked on which websites were being utilized during our regular periodic rounds to each group, a reasonable amount of trust was given with their work on the computer. They were both familiar with powerpoint

software and the internet from previous classes and did not require any training or assistance with technology from Mrs. Smith or me. The remainder of their worktime was spent selecting backgrounds, proofreading their work and rehearsing the oral presentation they would give along with the powerpoint slides.

The girls produced the following powerpoint presentation:

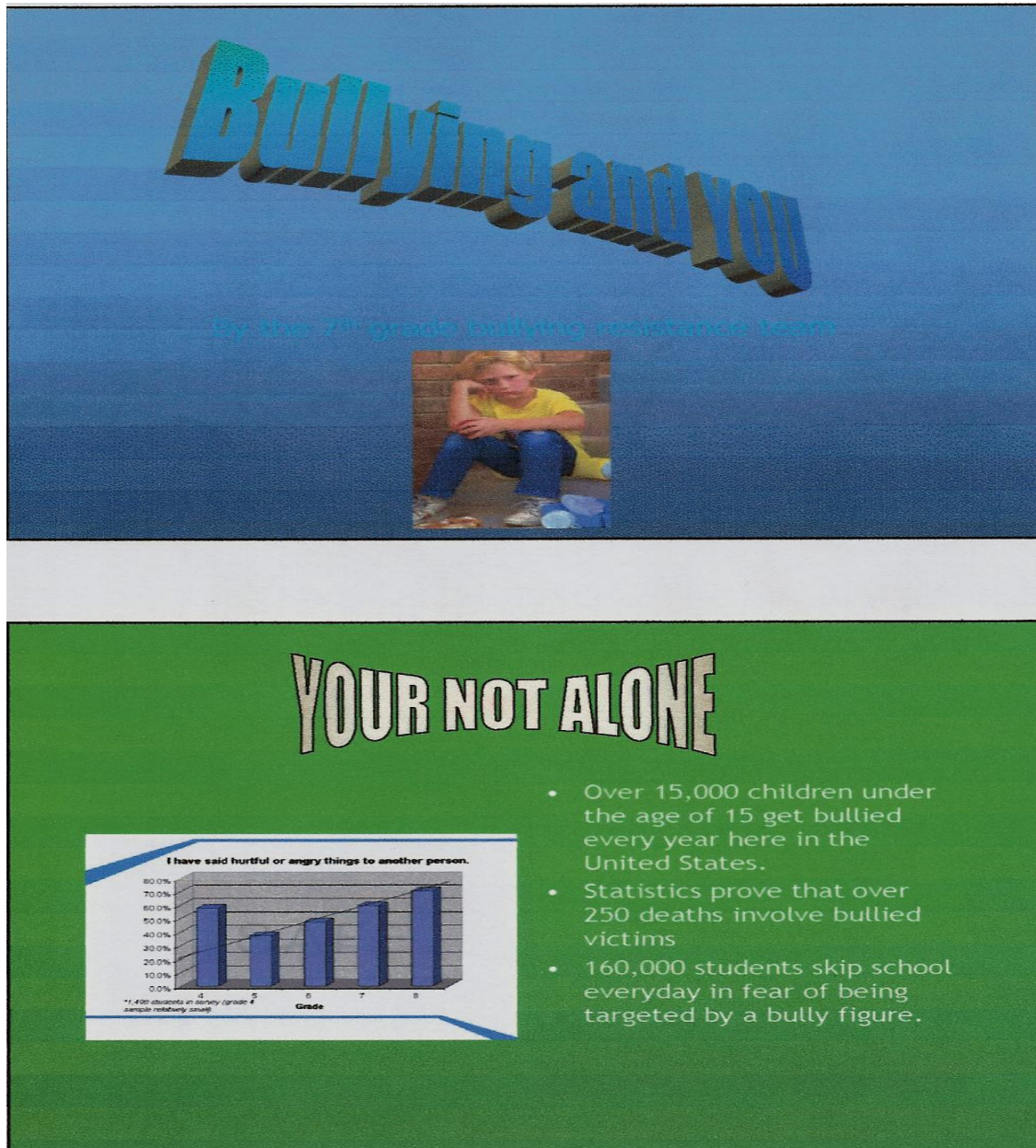


Figure 18. Student created powerpoint presentation, slides 1 & 2.



## The truth about **BULLYING**

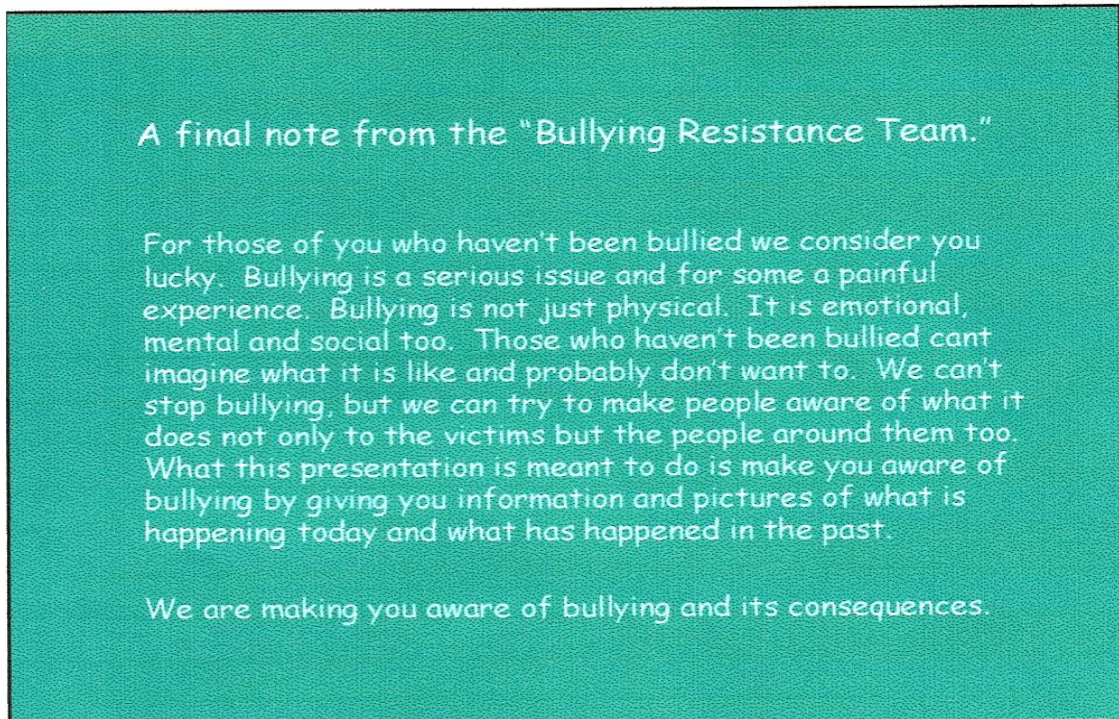
- 17 out of 20 minors have either been a target of a bully, or have been the bully.
- 50 out of 65 teachers admit they have witnessed bullying first hand and avoided the situation and did not say anything to the target nor the bully.
- Bullying is the most common form of violence in our society. Between 15 percent and 30 percent of students are bullies or victims.
- An estimated 160,000 children miss school everyday due to fear of attack or intimidation by other students.
- Students identified as bullies by the age of eight are six times more likely to become involved in criminal behavior.

## **WHAT TO DO...**

- ✓ Stick up for yourself...the bully may be intimidating but in most cases sticking up for yourself one time is all it takes.
- ✓ Talk to someone like a guardian, teacher, older friend, relative, or someone you can trust.
- ✓ Write down how you feel about a bullies' action toward you.
- ✓ If it is a minor bullying problem, at first try to avoid the situation, but do not hesitate to contact an adult if the situation escalates.

Figure 19. Student created powerpoint presentation, slides 3 & 4.





*Figure 20.* Student created powerpoint presentation, slide 5.

The two girls who coordinated the powerpoint slides delivered the powerpoint presentation as well. The girls gave a brief welcome to the other seventh grade class for coming. They announced that the class had been invited to the presentation to learn about bullying and that their own class had been learning about bullying during the grading period. The two girls then alternately read the powerpoint slides.

The clip art selection in the opening slide (see Figure 18) conveys feelings of sadness and loneliness, which really became a theme of the presentation. This is supported in the second slide (see Figure 18) with the statistics selection regarding students who miss school and die due to bullying problems. The third slide (see Figure 19) is very similar to the second slide as it continues to focus on the isolation aspects of bullying adding some information about the frequency that bullying behaviors occur. The fourth slide (see Figure 19) changes the focus of the presentation as it gives four common

suggestions for students to employ if they find themselves in bullying situations. Up through this point in the presentation, the two creators have taken the information from other sources. Granted, the information is cohesive in selection so that there are running themes: isolation, loneliness, frequency, and appropriate responses. Yet, the fifth slide (see Figure 20) takes a personal turn and the girls no longer convey the thoughts and statistics of others, but stake a claim of their own and put a plea to their peers. The title “Bullying Resistance Team” that is used in this slide was created by their group and was not discussed or a part of any larger planning. This is how the two girls viewed their role and message. For example, “we can’t stop bullying, but we can try to make people aware of what it does not only to the victims but the people around them too.” Their opinions reflected earlier discussions (see Figure 14) where there was a repeated sentiment expressed that no one can make someone else stop bullying, not a law, not a teacher. Here, the students themselves were acknowledging that they cannot make anyone stop bullying, but that the goal of their presentation is to raise awareness. Raised awareness creates opportunities for people to contemplate their actions in a new way and perhaps change their perspectives and subsequent actions. Ultimately it is each one who is responsible for their own positive or negative actions. The students convey a connection between awareness and responsibility. This idea is reiterated two more times by the end of the fifth slide: “What this presentation is meant to do is make you aware of bullying by giving you information and pictures of what is happening today and what has happened in the past” and “We are making you aware of bullying and its consequences.”

### *The Skit*

The five girls writing and performing the bullying skit did not ever formally write a text to follow. Their worktime was not efficient and rarely productive. Instead of spending the time to plan formally, the skit morphed from day to day and the girls were fairly antagonistic in development. The group of girls daily negotiated what would be said, where people would stand. Everyday the skit would change. The girls were encouraged to at least jot down some key phrases and stage directions that would help them solidify their ideas. This guidance was repeatedly rejected by the girls, who argued with each other daily about what had actually taken place and decided on the day before. This group required more adult oversight than the other groups. Some arguments that were observed included: one girl upset at the other for not wanting to dress alike during the presentation day, song selection to be used in the skit, one girl complaining that another girl was standing too close to her. All five girls in the group claimed friendship both inside and outside of the classroom. Mrs. Smith reported the work behaviors of this group as “typical for seventh grade girls at MC Middle School and typical for this group of girls specifically.” After the third workday, I spoke with the girls and gave them the opportunity for any of them to join another group. Each girl declined. One of the girls even commented, “Why would we want to do that? This is so much fun.”

The interactive behaviors of the girls and their confusion about my concern for them is a reflection of middle school gender differences and bullying behaviors. I was interpreting their behaviors and constant “fussing” at each other as verbal and sometimes emotional bullying, or at the very least jockeying for positions of power in a negative way. The girls, on the other hand, did not appear to view their behaviors as questionable.

Even after my offer to them to switch projects, they did not infer that as a cue to behave differently. The remainder of their workdays were carried on in much the same manner as the first three. Ironically, this was the only group who requested additional worktime together. They asked for a pass from their study hall to come and work on their skit five times. Mrs. Smith reported that they did report to her room during those five opportunities and worked in the same manner as what they did during the regularly scheduled worktime.

This was also the only group project where adult editing took place. During one of the additional work sessions during the study hall period, Mrs. Smith asked the girls to show her what they had worked on. The skit included a portion where two girls were dancing. Mrs. Smith reported that the dancing moves the girls had worked on that day were “grossly inappropriate” and were outside the guidelines that the school allows for middle school dances and school functions. Mrs. Smith required the girls to change the dance steps. Mrs. Smith reported that the girls did not seem to show any emotions including embarrassment, contempt, etc. and immediately began work on what they could do instead.

Figure 21 is an outline of the skit I created based on the videotaped footage of the presentation:

Two girls are dancing when two other girls come and ask the first two girls to turn down the music.
The two girls dancing begin a verbal confrontation with second two girls and begin to make fun of them because they are on the academic superbowl team.
The academic superbowl team girls ask the two dancing girls if they will teach them how to dance.
The two dancing girls teach academic superbowl team girls to dance.
The academic superbowl team girls then tutor the two dancing girls with their homework.
The two dancing girls then dance again in a school talent show that they win as the two academic superbowl girls sit and cheer in the audience.
The two academic superbowl girls then compete in an academic challenge as the two dancing girls sit and cheer in the audience.
The fifth member of the girls skit group takes the role of all adults in the skit. She is the teacher grading the homework, the master of ceremonies for the talent show, and announcer for the academic superbowl challenge.

*Figure 21.* Outline of student created skit.

The focus of this group was the entertainment value of their skit versus conveying information about bullying. A significant portion of the skit was dedicated to the dance scenes. Three dance scenes in all nearly took up an entire song played on a portable CD player. The dialogue for the remainder of the skit was very sketchy and difficult to follow at times. Close to the end of the skit during the actual presentation performed in front of the seventh grade audience, the fifth member of the group who portrayed all the adult roles forgot she was supposed to come out and give a ribbon to the academic superbowl girls. One of the dancing girls chastised the girl who forgot her part during the performance, saying, “Come on, gosh, remember what you’re doing.” There was not an apparent reaction to this from any members of the group of performing girls or that of the audience.

While the group of girls did have basic elements of bullying in their skit, mainly relational bullying, overall I was disappointed that the girls did not appear to apply or synthesize the information explored in the lessons in a more reflective manner. The skit

could be interpreted to have a problem solving or conflict resolution theme that resonates in it. However, the girls did not demonstrate those same messages in their lack of cooperation with each other during the skit development. I was cautious in my intervention with this group. The focus of my study was to see what the students would glean from the lessons and then synthesize rather independently in their presentation. Perhaps greater input or intervention on my part would have helped the students gain a clearer picture and move further in their understanding. However, that level of engagement would not have been in the same vein as the assistance provided for other groups. For the purpose and focus of the study, I did not want to coerce the group into saying or doing what I wanted, causing the data to be skewed. Given that, there is little evidence the girls were able to evaluate or reflect on their own behaviors and identify the active roles of bullying which manifested during the planning and performance sections of their project. The skit did not demonstrate the same level of clear and explicit anti-bullying messages and quality delivery. Another indicator of this is the amount of worktime and additional work sessions dedicated to dance, appearance, and quarreling versus the refusal to generate and contemplate the dialogue and storyline that would be portrayed. Some possibilities surface as reasons for the lack of depth in their skit project: (1) adolescent development and maturity, perhaps the girls were not ready developmentally or intellectually to synthesize the material and evaluate their own behaviors on a personal application level. (2) ingrained social construct, the pull of the “normal” everyday social constructs of their behaviors outweighed the value of internalizing the bullying information which would have raised awareness and perhaps accountability for those behaviors.

### *The Rap Video*

The five boys producing the rap video wrote the lyrics within the first few days. The remainder of the time was spent practicing and creating a few dance moves, swaying, etc. I hired a musician and film enthusiast to create a beat for the boys to rap to and film the video footage. The boys divided up and assigned the verse sections of the rap to be performed individually. The chorus portion of the rap was done as a whole. More than half of the boys did not desire a solo section but participated in the chorus and dance breaks.

While the verse lyrics (see Figure 22) are original, the boys derived the chorus portion from the popular rap *Kick, Push* (Fiasco, 2006). The *Kick, Push* lyrics originally described a skateboard scenario where a skater would kick, push, and coast. However, the group of boys changed the meaning of the lyrics to represent physical aggressive (kick, push) and the attitude conveyed and lack of consequences that bullies often face (coast). Continuing the analogy, the *Kick, Push* lyrics, “And that’s the way they roll, rebels looking for a place to go” (Figure 22) refers to skaters who are looking for places to skate and can be rebellious by skating in unauthorized areas. The group of boys took the lyrics in their alternate context of bullying to suggest that bullies are rebellious and seeking out places to go and create chaos. This idea is further demonstrated in the next modified line, “They ain’t holy, they just wanna bully.” Figure 22 contains the rap video lyrics:

Yo, this is a story of a girl named Tory  
She went to school thinkin' she was cool  
She made all A's yeah she got good grades  
She started thinking too hard and her temples started hurtin'  
Her grades dropped and she got to flirtin'  
And then she got mixed up with the wrong people  
And then she started bullyin' with the mean people  
She kept doin' it and doin' it well  
She knocked down kids and then they fell  
She made kids cry all day long  
That's why we are singin' this song

So they kicked, pushed, kicked, pushed, kicked pushed and coast  
And that's the way they roll, rebels lookin' for a place to go  
They ain't holy, they just wanna bully  
A pot of peas call us the EZE's  
It might not seem but we the American Dream because we ain't bullies

Now there was this guy named Bob  
His favorite food was corn on the cob  
He ate all the time and people made him feel fat  
They made him feel alone like he was a rat  
All the cool kids called him fluffy  
Because he was kinda puffy  
So he started eatin' all the time to get rid of stress  
So he could fit in with the rest  
Then a friend introduced him to a game  
To get his mind of it and get rid of the shame  
And it was called Ping-Pong  
And so we gonna keep singin' this song  
So they kicked, pushed, kicked, pushed, kicked pushed and coast  
And that's the way they roll, rebels lookin' for a place to go  
They ain't holy, they just wanna bully  
A pot of peas call us the EZE's  
It might not seem but we the American Dream because we ain't bullies

Now this is a story of a homosexual  
He was cool and intellectual  
His name was John  
He fished in a pond  
The only thing different about him  
He liked a guy named Tim  
Everyone laughed at them  
Especially a guy named Jim  
He picked a fight  
He thought he was tight



He wouldn't stop  
 He was actin' like B-Hop (background: Bernard Hopkins)  
 Then John started bullying to relieve his stress  
 He felt all cool thinkin' he was the best  
 He made people sad and cry  
 It got so bad he committed suicide  
 He acted very wrong  
 And that's why we singin' this song

So they kicked, pushed, kicked, pushed, kicked pushed and coast  
 And that's the way they roll, rebels lookin' for a place to go  
 They ain't holy, they just wanna bully  
 A pot of peas call us the EZE's  
 It might not seem but we the American Dream because we ain't bullies

So they kicked, pushed, kicked, pushed, kicked pushed and coast  
 And that's the way they roll, rebels lookin' for a place to go  
 They ain't holy, they just wanna bully  
 A pot of peas call us the EZE's  
 It might not seem but we the American Dream because we ain't bullies

*Figure 22.* Student created rap video lyrics.

As a whole, the rap was focused and contained several elements discussed during the lessons leading up to the social action project. For example, the students reported that the second verse about the boy who was bullied because of his weight was inspired by the guest speaker who spoke of being bullied and self-esteem issues that came from being bigger than the other kids. It is also worth noting that the verses include female and male as main characters in bullying scenarios. The lyrics also spans a variety of stereotypical reasons that can make target's vulnerable to bullying behaviors. Verse one discusses intellect and academic success as a quality which can become targeted. Verse two addresses appearance as a targeted quality. Verse three lyrics regarding homosexuality and verse one lyrics pertaining to flirting refer to sexual behaviors as a target. In addition, a variety of responses to bullying behaviors were explored in the lyrics. In verse one, the response to bullying is crying all day long. In verse two, the response to bullying

is finding an interest and redirecting the focus of the target's attention of something they do well. Verse three shows a target responding by becoming a bully and eventually having so much turmoil that he commits suicide. The concepts of suicide and homosexuality were not formally addressed in the predetermined lesson content. In other words, there was no "bullying due to sexuality" lesson, for example. However, the students did generate these ideas during open-ended lesson assignments and discussions. During the brainstorm of stereotypes lesson, students did note sexual orientation as a characteristic that is easily targeted by bullies. The students complete the lyrics with "we ain't bullies." These lyrics serve as a self-efficacy mantra defining their present behaviors. Overall, the lyrics contain an impressive range and depth of understanding. Even the choice to select the *Kick, Push* (Fiasco, 2006) song to immolate was fairly sophisticated in choosing an established lyrics which could stay fairly stationary, yet change meaning to fit the purpose of a different topic.

While the majority of the rap lyrics were focused on bullying and included many of the concepts explored in the unit lessons, there were still aspects of popular culture that was infused and did not seem to relate clearly back to bullying. For example, the chorus line "a pot of peas call us the EZE's" was puzzling in relationship to the context of the text. When I asked the boys to elaborate on any hidden meaning that might escape me, their response was "It sounded cool and rhymed." What appeared to be a potential anagram in EZE, in reality did not stand for anything, or at least anything they desired to share with me. I also questioned them for a deeper understanding of "it might not seem we're the American Dream." Again, they indicated that "It sounded tough, like something on MTV." Looking at both aspects of the lyrics, there were dual concepts at

work, the content that was meaningful and the content needed to be cool to their peers. Looking over the entire text, the bullying information content does take up a majority of the lyrics written. A much smaller percentage of the lyrics is dedicated to popular culture and peer relations. Therefore, the focus was indeed on bullying and was infused with popular culture versus popular culture sprinkled with bullying information.

### *The Pamphlet*

The five students comprised of two boys and three girls producing the pamphlet worked independently together on most workdays. By that, I mean that once the initial conversation occurred deciding that they would each write a personal narrative and then compile them into a pamphlet, there was little interaction or further conversation. This group of five usually arranged chairs with connected desktops into a circle. Then, each would work on their own writing with little input or feedback from other members of the group. Once the narratives were completed, the group spent the remainder of their workdays on graphics and font decisions, printing, and tri-folding pamphlets. Figure 23 is the unfolded version of the pamphlet:

**While I was in 5<sup>th</sup> grade I bullied people. Other people bullied me too and made me feel bad about myself so when I bullied people I felt good about myself. I knew how I was making people feel but I didn't care I just wanted to get rid of the anger inside me. I don't ever want to bully someone again. But I think as long as I get bullied I will bully people to make me feel better.**

**Maple Crest boy**



**We always see bullying around us, and sometimes we get bullied, too. Most of the time we don't do anything to help people that are being bullied. Sometimes that makes them feel even worse.**

**Now that we are more mature here are some stories about kids that have been bullied.**



**Produced by  
7th grade students  
Spring 2006**

# Bullying



Figure 23. Student created pamphlet, side 1.

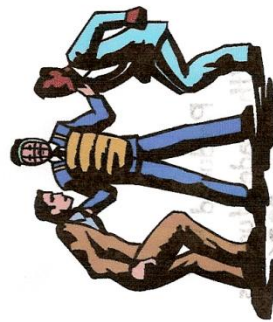
When I was little I was bullied because I was different from the other kids, like the way I looked and what I wore. I thought that they liked me so I said almost the same thing to them and that made the group mad at me. So every time I came to school they would make me feel like that I should not be alive. But luckily I had friends back then. When it was almost the end of the year the group tried to hurt me when I was in the restroom. Of course they didn't because I had the teacher with me. Of course the teacher was not always there so I had to do something. At lunchtime I walked to them and told them to leave me alone. Even though I got kicked in the stomach the teacher saw the fight and they got in trouble and were sent to a different school. I was very happy.

There are a lot of people who get bullied a lot so don't be a bully or the person who gets bullied.

Maple Crest girl

Bullying is not a good thing to do because it can really affect your life and the life of others. The reason why I am writing this is because this is a serious matter and it is affecting the life of others today and all over the world. That's why we should not bully other people.

7th grade student



At this moment I am being bullied because I am "different". And it hurts really bad, it doesn't feel good. It is the same with every body else. It hurts them in side. So please stop, it doesn't feel good. It feels like I want to hurt them, so what do you think it feels like to every body else? That is why we have so many bullies, because when we are young we get bullied. People end up in Kinsey, and that is not pretty.

7th grade student

Figure 24. Student created pamphlet, side 2.

The content of the pamphlet is intimate and shows the level of personal connections this group of students made with the lessons and information leading up to the social action project. Perhaps the strongest example of this is the following narrative taken from Figure 24:

At this moment I am being  
bullied because I am  
“different”. And it hurts really  
bad, it doesn’t feel good. It is  
the same with every body else.  
It hurts them in side. So please  
stop, it doesn’t feel good. It  
feels like I want to hurt them,  
so what do you think it feels  
like to every body else? That is  
why we have so many bullies,  
because when we are young  
we get bullied. People end up  
in Kinsey, and that is not  
pretty.

The author of this narrative takes risk by sharing his emotions openly and honestly; “it hurts really bad,” “it doesn’t feel good,” “It feels like I want to hurt them.” The author also displays knowledge of consequences, “people end up in Kinsey, and that is not pretty.” Although it is unclear who exactly is the recipient of the author’s caution since Kinsey is a center for both children who break the law or are behaviorally out of control and are ordered to the center via the judicial system. However, Kinsey also serves as a safe facility for children who have been victim to damaging environments. There may be a connection to his own emotions and fear of acting out and hurting others and the possibility of ending up in a detention facility because of his own potential actions.

Further, the author's words "that is why we have so many bullies, because when we are young we get bullied" seems to rationalize contemplated reactive bully behaviors.

Across the pamphlet writing samples, several themes emerge. The first theme is that of a need for response. Sentiments such as "I had to do something," "most of the time we don't do anything to help people that are being bullied," and "I just wanted to get rid of the anger inside me," and "But I think as long as I get bullied I will bully people to make me feel better." These statements all share the desire for action. The type of actions suggested show a lack of knowledge and peaceable resolutions that the students consider. The second theme is that of frequency. The narratives contains references of bully behaviors frequented at school. Sample comments include "so every time I came to school they would make me feel like I should not be alive" and "we always see bullying around us, and sometimes we get bullied, too." A third theme is that of persuasion and change. Several of the narratives include pleas for bullying to stop. Examples include "There are a lot of people who get bullied a lot so don't be a bully or the person who gets bullied," "The reason why I am writing this because this is a serious matter and it is affecting the life of others today and all over the world. That's why we should not bully other people" and "now that we are more mature." The last example in particular seems to plead to a deeper level of understanding and tolerance that should accompany their position in the middle school setting.

After the powerpoint, skit, and rap video presentations, the rap video group thanked the seventh grade audience for coming and paying attention to their presentation. Mrs. Smith then announced to the audience that there were a group of students who created a pamphlet that they wanted to distribute as the final portion of the presentation.

Mrs. Smith did this announcement because the students who created the pamphlet did not want to speak in front of the audience, but did agree to distribute the pamphlets for themselves. Earlier in this chapter during the portion on decision making, I described the request for me to distribute the pamphlets, which I declined. The teacher accompanying the seventh grade audience, Mrs. Nelson, directed her students to line up at the door once they had received their pamphlet. All pamphlets were distributed and no audience members stood to line up. All audience members appeared to be reading the pamphlet. Mrs. Nelson again reminded the audience members to line up at the door and that there would be time for them to read the pamphlets later. A few audience members looked up from their seats and shifted, but no audience members lined up. Mrs. Nelson then asked Mrs. Smith if she minded if the student audience stayed until they were finished reading the pamphlet. Mrs. Smith indicated they were welcome to stay as long as they wanted. The room remained silent and the audience read. After approximately five minutes, the students in the audience began to trickle into a line at the door and left with Mrs. Nelson.

It was a pleasant surprise when the audience was engaged to the point that they did not wait to read the pamphlet at a later time, but sat and read the pamphlet immediately. While Mrs. Nelson tried to redirect them on two occasions, the audience made a statement concerning how they valued the presentation, the work of their peers, and/or the information they were given by staying put.

### *Summary*

The implementation of the social action project fit very closely to the plan the Mrs. Smith's students laid out in advance. The rap video, powerpoint, and pamphlet groups shared themes of personalization, bullying information, and a call to action in



each of their presentation projects. The skit group was disappointing. Although I have reviewed my notes and videotape of the presentation, I do not come away fully understanding what caused the disconnect for the skit group. As described in this chapter under the skit section, gender, social constructs, maturity, developmental limitations, not to mention outside factors such as dispositions, family influences, environment, etc. could all contribute to the reasons this group did not incorporate strong explicit bullying information and themes into their project to an equivalent level as the other three groups.

### *The Feedback*

In this section I report the immediate feedback given by Mrs. Smith's class reflecting on their presentation and the impact they felt it had on their class and the audience. In addition, audience feedback on the viewed presentation is reported. The feedback from both groups was reported through a Socratic seminar. Immediately following the presentation, which lasted approximately 30 minutes, neither the presenting group of students nor the audience conversed with each other, with their own group, or with adults until they met with me for the Socratic seminar session. This was important to me so that I would get their untainted first reactions that had not been swayed by teachers or peers. I met with the audience group first and the presenting group last in case there was information that arose during the audience session that I would want to explore with the Mrs. Smith's students. Each Socratic seminar session was held to 30 minutes. The time allotment for the seminar sessions was dictated by the school schedule and limited by changing classes and restrictions of other teachers' lesson plans. MC Middle School faculty has had extensive professional development training pertaining to Socratic seminars. The teachers regularly use the strategy for discussion, so no training was

needed for students. I just quickly announced that we would be conducting a Socratic seminar, that students were free to ask each other questions, piggyback of each other's responses, or bring about a new topic. Students sat in a circle and I posed a broad discussion question to begin the conversation. I then interjected questions only when there seemed to be a significant lull in the dialogue or for clarity of a particular topic. During the discussion I kept general notes on themes or highlighted points. I did not want my presence or incessant writing to distract from the students' focus on discussion.

### *The Audience*

I was only able to obtain permission from six students to participate in the Socratic seminar. While I had ten human subjects approval for students to participate, I had one teacher who decided not to give permission for students to miss a portion of her class. She did not notify me in advance so that I could have arranged an alternate plan and I did not realize what had happened until several days after the session. Since this teacher had four of the audience members in her class, this was a disappointment and reduced the feedback by nearly half as many students.

I began the session by asking the six participating audience members "what did you think about the presentation you just saw?" Students responses were: "I liked it. I thought they did a good job." Then there was a long pause. At this point I did not choose to interject any questions. I wanted to give them plenty of time to warm up and not rush them. Finally, Dwayne spoke up and talked about how bullying is a serious problem in middle school, but he didn't think that a presentation would stop it. Anna, seated across from him, was quick to counter his opinion. She posed the opinion that while you might not be able to make someone stop bullying, there is no excuse not to try. The debate

between the two went back and forth a few times with neither one appearing to modify their opinions. A second pause in the dialogue occurred. Interestingly enough, this was a similar viewpoint shared by Mrs. Smith's class throughout the experience and that was a theme throughout the presentation. As discussed in the section above, awareness and how awareness inspires personal change was a theme in each of the projects versus regulating, banning or "making" people not bully anymore.

A third student, Marla, redirected the conversation by stating that she really liked the rap video. The students agreed with the sentiment. Dwayne said that he liked the pamphlet best because it was the part he most related to. Discussion then centered on each portion of the presentation. This discussion took up the remainder of the allotted time. Sarah suggested that the group take each part and talk about it individually.

The feedback from the audience brings to light some interesting perspectives. The audience students did not have information on the work habits or group dynamics Mrs. Smith's students displayed. However, the audience members identified the skit as the weakest link of the presentation in respect to bullying information, planning, and presentation. Ironically, the portion that the audience had positive comments on was the dancing, which was the focus of that group's time and energy. This was surprising to me. I wondered in advance about Mrs. Smith girls' popularity, status, and entertainment creating positive opinions about their portion of the presentation. However, those elements did not seem to weigh heavily with audience opinion. I had anticipated that the audience would most appreciate and connect with the rap video, especially given the strong connection with popular culture and media that Mrs. Smith's students had displayed earlier in the unit with the *Odd Girl Out* film. However, while the audience

liked the rap video in terms of entertainment, they did have suggestions to make the message of the lyrics bring to bare a bit more in the foreground, such as being able to see the words or see it multiple times. Most interesting to me was the role the pamphlet played in impacting the presentation. While I had inferred student interest in the pamphlet when students did not get out of their seats to line up and leave the presentation, instead they sat and read the pamphlet, I had not anticipated the audience members would connect so quickly and personally with it. An example of this is the student who not only felt it was important for him but was going to take the pamphlet home to his brother. In such a brief amount of time, it is difficult to determine any change that might have taken place within the audience in regards to what knowledge was gained and how it impacted the students.

*Table 7. Audience comments on social action project presentation.*

<b>Presentation Component</b>	<b>Student Comments</b>
Powerpoint	I thought it was good. I learned things I didn't know before. I didn't realize that kids miss that much school. It was sad about how many kids commit suicide. It was the least exciting part of the presentation.
Skit	I didn't really get it. They were good dancers. This part really didn't talk too much about bullying. It didn't look like they had practiced very much.
Rap Video	This was really good. It really looked like something on MTV It had a lot of stuff about bullying. I don't know if people would pay attention more to the video or the words. Maybe you would have to see it a few times to really get the message. But the message is there. It is talking about how bad it is on people to bully. This was my favorite part. Maybe it would be better if we could see the words.
Pamphlet	I really liked this part. I thought it was the part that was most convincing. I wished we would've known who did the pamphlet. I saved mine to take it home to my brother. It was a good way to end the presentation. It should be passed out to all the middle school kids here.

In the short-term I think the audience was able to give constructive criticism and was processing the information presented intellectually (this part didn't talk too much about bullying), emotionally (it was the least exciting part of the presentation) and socially (it should be passed out to all the school kids here).

#### *The Presenters*

All 17 of Mrs. Smith's students were present for the Socratic seminar debriefing their experiences and their perspectives on their social action projects. I began the session in the same way I began it with the audience group by asking a similar question, "How do

you think your presentation went?” The students had similar broad beginning remarks just as the audience group had begun: “We did a good job” and “It went just like we planned” were common responses. Without any pauses members of each group started talking about their part of the presentation. After each group “reported” to the whole, the rest of the class affirmed or challenged the group’s self-evaluation. This was not a pattern of response I initiated. This group was very chatty, to the point where I interjected only when multiple talkers emerged to remind them to speak one at a time, not over one another. Table 8 outlines each group’s self-report and feedback from their peers:

Table 8. Student self-reflection and peer evaluation comments on social action project presentation.

Presentation Component	Group Self-Report	Peer Responses
Powerpoint	I thought we did good. I think everyone paid attention. It maybe could've been longer.	I wish you wouldn't have just read it. It had a lot of good information. I'm glad we did it first. It didn't need to be longer.
Skit	We did great. I bet everyone really liked it. I wish we would've had matching shirts. I think we should've been louder.	I think you guys shouldn't have kept changing it. It really seemed like there was a lot of dancing in it today. Was it always like that? It didn't really ever say anything about bullying, did it? It was ok. It would've been hard to do it in front of everyone. It was my least favorite part.
Rap Video	Our group really didn't do a lot today since ours was taped. Maybe it would've been good if we would've done it in person like the skit. I think everyone really liked it. I don't know if people could really understand the words today.	It was my favorite part. Maybe we could've put the words on a powerpoint. It had good information in it and it was fun to watch. It's too much like stuff we watch for fun. I wonder if people took it seriously.
Pamphlet	We were surprised when people read it in the room. I was glad we didn't have to say anything in front of all those kids. I hope they use our pamphlet for other classes or other times. I was nervous about writing mine, but now I'm not.	It was the best part. I hope they use it other times, too. I think it was the audiences favorite part. I think they really read it.

Mrs. Smith's class was mostly positive about their presentation. The self-reports from the powerpoint, rap video, and pamphlet had both reflections affirmed and questioning their work. The peer evaluations for the powerpoint, rap video, and pamphlet were close in nature to the self-reports of the presenting group. Again, the girls group

presenting the skit appear to be at odds with peer reviews. While other groups questioned the presentation beyond aesthetics (for example, the rap video questioned if people could really understand the words on the videotape), the skit group only questioned their choice of clothing (example, I wished we would've worn matching shirts). The skit group's self-report and the peer feedback is in opposition. This opposition shows a lack of reflection and perhaps a lack of maturity, understanding, or synthesis of the anti-bullying lessons leading up to and what was to be imbedded in the social action project.

In conclusion of the Socratic seminar I asked a second question, "what do you think about the last six weeks, the time spent learning about bullying, the activities and resources we've worked through?" All students in unison replied in a positive manner. Some of the comments were: "They should do this every year," "I wish more classes were like this," "I learned a lot," "I really wish we got to do real projects like this more often," "If they did this next year, I'd like to come and help the class doing it." Just as with the students in the audience, it is difficult to infer within the scope of this study the impact the critical literacy lessons and social action project may have on Mrs. Smith's students in the longterm, the immediate feedback shows a desire to continue exploring bullying as an issue (example, "if they did this next year, I'd like to come and help the class doing it") and a personal and positive connection to the strategies and content introduced (examples, "I really wish we got to do real projects like this one more often" and "they should do this every year").

### *Summary*

The feedback given by the audience and presenters was insightful. The audience and presenters shared many of the same opinions about clarity (providing the words for



the rap video), personal connections (the pamphlet being the most praised portion), and meaning (the lack of information and relevancy of the skit). Ideally, I would have liked to have more time and student feedback. Mrs. Smith and I arranged with the teachers in the following classes, weeks in advance about the additional time that would be needed for debriefing. It was unfortunate and perhaps speaks the value placed on anti-bully programming and research at MC Middle School that the outlined negotiated timetable was not permitted to be followed. I was impressed by how both audience and presenters were able to organize their discussion of the presentation in an orderly and sophisticated manner. Even in the instance with Mrs. Smith's students where the skit group's self-report did not align with their peers, the girls in the skit group did not retaliate or show any negative body language or dialogue during the discussion. They appeared to accept the criticism. The same level of tolerance of opinions was expressed in the audience group when Dwayne and Anna expressed opposing viewpoints. While they did not appear to sway each other's viewpoints, they allowed each other to speak in turn and it was not apparent that there was a desire to "win" in the dialogue exchange.

### *Pulling it Together*

In looking at the social action project in overview, the students in Mrs. Smith's seventh grade class were able to plan and implement a presentation successfully, a majority of which was relevant and focused on conveying an anti-bullying message. Not all groups were able to achieve or convey the same depth of understanding. However, collectively, the audience was able to synthesize the meaning and poignancy of the presentation. Mrs. Smith's group reflected on their own understanding and presentation,

gave and accepted constructive peer criticism, and some even began to think about continuing steps in anti-bullying programming at their school.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusions

In the previous two chapters I outlined the data collected in working with Mrs. Ives' seventh grade class to examine bullying through a critical lens. After each section of data I included summaries which began to analyze the data and suggest a larger connection back to the theoretical frameworks outlined in Chapter 3. This final chapter will combine those findings and suggestions into assertions that respond to the questions outlined at the beginning of this study:

1. How will a teacher-directed bullying unit utilizing critical literacy practices impact a middle school seventh grade class?
2. How will a student-directed social action project on bullying that was developed and implemented by middle school students impact the students who developed the project and the selected audience?
3. To what extent will the combination of critical literacy practices addressing the issue of bullying work as an anti-bullying strategy?

The remainder of this chapter is outlined by the research questions followed by an overarching assertion derived and supported by the literature detailed in Chapter 2 and resulting from close and careful analysis of the data. Following each portion outlining the research question, assertion, and connection back to the conceptual frameworks, each section is summarized. I address limitations of this study and implications for future studies at the end of this chapter. Research questions 1 and 2 are answered collectively. Since research question 3 is a question pertaining to the conceptual framework overall, it is addressed on its own.

The assertions in the remainder of the chapter and discussion of how the data connects to the conceptual framework is analyzed and discussed within this study's specific context. Chapters 1 and 3 detail the context of this study. However, in summary, this research took place with 17 seventh graders in a Midwestern, midsize middle school. This study's foundation is the use of critical literacy practices to address bullying issues in the school setting. As I outlined missing elements in current research in Chapter 2, the study was conceptualized around the lack of critical literacy studies focusing specifically on bullying and the lack of critical literacy studies in the middle school setting. In addition, this study also focused on the lack of current research on anti-bully programs in school, specifically embracing and tracking the use of one anti-bully method.

Based on these underdeveloped elements in current critical literacy and bullying research, Mrs. Smith's middle school students were led through a series of lessons pertaining to bullying created through a critical lens by their teacher and myself. At the end of these teacher-directed lessons (see Appendix), students created and implemented a social action project addressing bullying in their school. This study explores the results of the combination of critical literacy and bullying in this context. I discuss the limitations within this context and suggest implications and pathways for future research.

### *Research Questions 1 and 2*

1. How will a teacher directed bullying unit utilizing critical literacy practices impact a middle school seventh grade class?
2. How will a student-directed social action project on bullying, developed and implemented by middle school students, impact those who developed the project and the selected audience?

### *Assertions*

Middle school seventh graders participating in this teacher-directed bullying unit utilizing critical literacy practices were positively impacted as they explored and discussed the complex sociopolitical issue of bullying and ramifications of bullying behaviors. Student input impacted the curriculum as they began to initiate responsibility for their own learning. The importance of Mrs. Smith's role in the classroom was evident and reinforced the current research on the teacher's role in addressing bullying and bringing critical literacy practices to the classroom. A majority of Mrs. Smith's middle school students creating and implementing the social action project were positively impacted as they applied and synthesized newly obtained bullying information, sought to raise awareness about bullying to their audience, and were able to reflect and evaluate their own performance and the potential impact on the audience. However, the impact of the students participating as the audience was less than the students designing the project in this instance. Further research could more fully explore that possibility more extensively. Audience members still discussed the complexity of bullying, gained new information, and evaluated the impact of the social action project presented by Mrs. Smith's class.

### *Bullying is Complex*

Going back to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, data collected in this study supported current research in bullying by Mrs. Smith's students and the selected audience for the social action project wrestled with the complexities of bullying. As students gained knowledge about bullying they began to apply that information to their personal bullying experiences. The data outlined in Chapters 4 and 5 demonstrated Mrs. Smith's

students debating power roles and relationships in bullying and drawing multiple conclusions in bullying scenarios. In this way, students were provided the opportunity to explore bullying as a multi-dimensional social issue with no one right answer or cure for the problem.

Participating students grew in their understanding of bullying behaviors. In the beginning students viewed bullying through a narrow lens focusing on physical aggression (see Chapter 4, Table 2). Over time, students incorporated a broader understanding of bullying types and behaviors into their schema. Analyzing bullying scenarios, the class developed their knowledge to the point where they could identify perpetrators and the type of bullying that was being manifested.

Students not only acquired knowledge about types of bullies, but they also wrestled with their understanding of responses to bullying behaviors. Students spent time contemplating scenarios and the reality and ramifications of their decisions. The first attempt at decision making via scenarios resulted in an overwhelming response for students to call the police (see Chapter 4, Figure 9). Students did not display an understanding in the beginning of the study of where to turn for assistance in bullying situations. Authoritarian roles of teachers, administrators, police, anti-bullying laws required further discussion and exploration. As Rigby and Bagshaw (2003) proclaimed in their research about student views of teacher intervention in bullying, Mrs. Smith's students did not seem to have a clear sense of the teacher's role and did not express any personal experiences where teachers or administrators had been helpful or intervened in bullying situations.

Students applied new information in multiple ways as demonstrate in the creation of their social action project. First, at the beginning of data collection, Mrs. Smith's students were asked to define bullying. As described Chapter 4, students voiced narrow stereotypical descriptions of bullying. Through the teacher-directed lessons, students were given information about bullying types, bullying roles, and the ramifications of bullying behaviors. After concluding the teacher-directed lessons, responsibility for the social action project was student-directed. Throughout all four portions of the social action presentations, students included information about a range of bullying types including relational, physical, sexual, and verbal. Second, students creating the skit portion of the presentation included information about bullying roles. At the conclusion of the skit, each student identified the role they were playing during the skit: perpetrator, victim, bystander, or ally. Third, during the rap video portion of the presentation, each verse contained not only a bullying scenario but also implications of bullying actions including suicide and low self-esteem.

Students broadened their understanding of social roles in bullying behaviors. A reoccurring discussion point in the data outlined in Chapters 4 and 5 focused on the identification of the victim, bully, ally, and bystander. This was a point of tension between Mrs. Smith and the students. Often there were varying viewpoints in identifying the roles and who was exhibiting victim or bully behaviors. In Chapter 4, I detailed a conversation after reading *Just One Flick of a Finger* where the Mrs. Ives and a female student debated whether the teacher in the book was a bully or ally.

### *Critical Literacy as an Avenue to Discuss Complex Social and Political Issues*

The students in Mrs. Smith's seventh grade discussed on a personal level and debated with their peers and adults about bullying issues. Students shared their own bullying experiences through their writing and their discussions. Their forgiveness/unforgiveness poems were particularly powerful, shown in Chapter 4 and 5 as they opened up and shared their perspectives of being victims as well as bullies. Feelings about the responsibilities of allies and bystanders came through in their writing as they challenged each other to go beyond an observer of bullying and take action. Students challenged the teacher in determining bullying roles as they challenged the role of the teacher in *Just One Flick of a Finger*. Class discussions including the question and answer session with the guest speaker, the role of legislation in regulating bullying, and possible responses to bullying scenarios are all examples of students discussing bullying through curriculum developed through a critical lens.

Evidenced in the social action project that Mrs. Smith's class created, students were not only free and willing to discuss bullying within their own classroom, but students were also willing to broaden the conversation and dialogue to include their peers from another classroom. The bullying pamphlet shown in Chapter 5 provided an avenue for students to share their own stories and opinions about bullying behaviors. Also in Chapter 5, the social action project and the student powerpoint presentation contained a plea from the creators to stop bullying at their school.

### *Ramifications of Bullying Behaviors.*

Current bullying research outlined in Chapter 2 revealed a variety of negative ramifications to bullying behaviors. As recently as the Virginia Tech tragedy in April



2007, the media has reported possible links to acts of terror on school campuses contributed to the mental anguish of long-term bullying (<http://www.topix.net/.../parenting/2007/04/medias-poison-atmosphere-fuels-shootings-like-virginia-tech-bully-expert>). Mrs. Smith students reflected their understanding of long and short term ramifications of bullying behaviors in their work.

I was very surprised by Mrs. Ives students' responses in the beginning of the study regarding the severity of short-term and long-term ramifications of bullying. This was demonstrated on the first day of the study when students laughed and attempted to justify bullying behaviors caught on film in the *Let's Get Real* documentary. This initial response was a direct opposite response when compared to the group of students who watched the film during my pilot study. I then further questioned the students' understanding of bullying as they sought to place blame on victims and others, as I discussed at length in Chapter 4. I wondered what degree the gravity and consequences of bullying was really becoming part of their thought process when contemplating bullying.

I was pleasantly surprised in the end during the social action presentations when students referenced many negative ramifications of bullying during their presentation, given the extent to which I felt the students had grappled with the concept. For example, the powerpoint included statistics about school absence connected to bullying, the rap group included self-esteem, depression, and suicide in their lyrics, and the pamphlet included juvenile detention implications for physical bullies.

### *Student Input*

As outlined in the conceptual framework in Chapter 2, student input was lacking in bullying research. This dissertation's design was focused on the inclusion of student

input and the impact it would have on the unit lessons and social action project. Student input did impact the direction and design on the unit lessons. Ultimately, the social action project was designed and implemented completely by the input of Mrs. Smith's students.

Mrs. Smith's students showed initiative in directing the path of the unit.

Originally I had intended for the students to read a chapter book and utilize discussion groups as an instructional strategy for exploring the text. The students were not engaged in the book or the discussion groups and continued asking to complete the film *Odd Girl Out*. I had only shown a portion of the film to compare and contrast gender in how bullying is manifested. The students were so adamant in finishing the film, that I redirected my original plans to meet their request.

Students also initiated responsibility in designing their own social action projects. I went into that section of data collection anticipating that one project would be created and that each student or group of students would work on a piece of the project. For example, I envisioned a poster project where each took responsibility to make posters, some students might have responsibility to work with the principal in hanging them up, etc. Instead, Mrs. Smith students initiated a model where four distinct project would come together to create one presentation: a powerpoint, a skit, a rap video, a pamphlet. The students then decided to create sign up sheets for the project they wanted to work on. Each group took responsibility to design their project, what information would be included, what props or materials were needed, and decide on a plan to bring their ideas to fruition. Finally the class took responsibility in determining and changing the focus audience based on the appropriateness of the material that was delivered.

### *Lacking Focus on Social Action Component*

As discussed in Chapter 2, current critical literacy research discusses the use of critical literacy practices, but in general, there is a lack of research focusing on the culmination and impact of the social action component. Mrs. Smith's class applied and synthesized new information obtained during the teacher-directed lessons in the creation of their social action presentation. Students demonstrated a desire to raise awareness about bullying in their school. Mrs. Smith's students were thoughtful in their reflection and evaluation of their own presentation and the impact it may have had on an audience of their peers.

Mrs. Smith's students demonstrated a desire to raise awareness in their school. One way this was demonstrated was by the selection of the audience. Students contemplated the "right" material to be presented to the "right" audience. They voiced their concerns about the need to fit the information to the appropriate audience. When faced with the dilemma whether to take out some of the content information in order to maintain a fifth grade audience or to keep the content information and change the audience, students unanimously decided the content was the message they wanted to present and it was important enough that they wanted their peers to hear what they had to say. Secondly, during the Socratic seminar following the social action presentation, students repeatedly returned to the question and desire for this project to be repeated in seventh grade next year for students. Two male students volunteered to help mentor the students next year should the teacher decide to continue to the project. One of these two students provided the concluding thought for the discussion by sharing his own personal

transformation and heightened awareness, saying, “I won’t think about it [bullying] the same way again.”

The Socratic seminar following the social action project gave insight to the reflective practices of Mrs. Smith’s students. The discussion was overwhelmingly positive as students congratulated each other on a job well done. While I had anticipated Mrs. Smith’s students to feel particularly proud or connected to their own portion of the presentation, I was surprised that three of the four groups were very objective in evaluating the potential impact on their peers. The rap group reflected that they thought the pamphlet was the most powerful portion of the presentation because it was personal and because the audience could take it with them as a reminder of what they had heard during the presentation. The powerpoint group agreed that the pamphlet presented the most powerful anti-bullying message by sharing students’ personal experiences. The pamphlet group felt the powerpoint presentation was the most powerful portion of the project because it showed the magnitude of the bullying problems in schools. The skit group was the only group that insisted their portion was the “best because we entertained and danced so good.” The rap, powerpoint, and pamphlet groups were quick in rebutting the skit group’s declaration and were all in agreement that the skit was the weakest component because it did not have an obvious anti-bullying message and that it did not inspire people to change. This did not sway the skit group’s opinion who reiterated their pride in their performance. I had anticipated the group to overwhelmingly be connected to the rap video for entertainment, pop culture/media reasons. Instead, the rap group offered their concern that their message was lost because of the “hype” of the music video concept.

The Socratic seminar session for the presentation audience yielded limited information for reasons discussed later in limitations portion in the limitations portion. However, the audience members that did participate demonstrated personal connections to the presentation and evidence that new information was gained through the presentation.

I was surprised how quickly the students who did participate in the discussion opened up and began sharing their own bullying stories. One student shared about being bullied because he was in special education classes for some subjects, one student shared about how she bullied another girl in elementary school, and one student shared about her friend who is being bullied now. When asked about what are current anti-bullying measures at their school and if they were aware of the anti-bully law, the students laughed and all agreed that no anti-bully measures are in place at their school. Further, one student voiced his opinion that an anti-bully law is futile because you cannot force people to be nice.

When asked which portion of the presentation was most affective in impacting their understanding or beliefs about bullying, all students agreed that the powerpoint information and the personal stories in the pamphlet were the most meaningful. The audience members mirrored the reflections of the rap video group as they expressed concern that the message had been lost in the pop culture media. They concluded that they would have to watch the video multiple times to glean the information and be able to focus on the words themselves. The audience also mirrored the reflections of Mrs. Ives' students who felt the skit did not contain an anti-bully message. The audience members unanimously agreed that they did not believe that the student audience probably did not

change their minds or behaviors because of the presentation, although it might have been people think about their behaviors while the presentation was actually going on.

Both Mrs. Smith's student and the audience members shared several similar thoughts: the skit message was weak, the message of the rap video may have been lost to entertainment, and the powerpoint and pamphlet portions were the most well developed in terms of conveying a straightforward anti-bullying message. However, the differences in the amount of knowledge gained and awareness raised is a point for further discussion. Mrs. Smith's students who spent the time taking the journey through the teacher-directed critical literacy lessons, took initiative in their own learning, took responsibility in designing their project were more invested and gained more information and sensitivity to bullying issues than the audience who had the information imparted to them in a short concentrated timespan. This alludes to the same issue of top-down adult imposed anti-bullying solutions, curriculum, and rules that was part of the original issues framing this study. From these findings, it appears that the greatest impact on bullying beliefs, information, awareness, and action stems from students who are invested in the process of their own learning. Simply telling a group of students about bullying has limited impact whether the information comes from adults or peers.

### *Teacher's Role*

As discussed in Chapter 2, the teacher plays an important role in interrogating bullying and implementing critical practices in the classroom. Mrs. Smith's was like many of the teachers described in the bullying and critical literacy conceptual frameworks. She had received little training in bullying. The information about school policies and bullying were contradictory and confusing to her, as discussed in Chapter 4.

At the same time, the only training or experiences she had with critical literacy was through our conversations, professional articles I shared with her, and the research pilot for this study. While Mrs. Smith had received little formal training in regards to bullying, she had done some independent reading and research on bullying and had her own experiences and frustrations as a teacher to draw on.

To her credit, Mrs. Smith did have a positive rapport and appeared to have a classroom where open communication was welcome and encouraged. Through our conversations, Mrs. Smith continually expressed the need for her students to talk and address bullying. She did not express concerns about student initiated change in curriculum or in turning the social action project over to student control. Mrs. Smith was always eager and very giving of her time, both in and out of class.

While willingness and openness is an important first step in the role of the teacher in bringing bullying issues and critical literacy practices to the classroom, as expressed in Chapter 2, without additional support from administration and colleagues, be that financial, policy, or pedagogical, it can be a difficult road for teachers to travel alone. This was exhibited in the time and scheduling limitations from colleagues discussed in Chapter 3 and again later in this chapter. There were also times when Mrs. Smith struggled to accept all views during discussion, for example, the conversation about the teacher's role as a bully in *Just One Flick of a Finger*. Rather than this being an issue in Mrs. Smith's social belief of teachers, I think the limitation came in facilitating a critical discussion. I come to this conclusion since Mrs. Smith was very open and supportive to the *Music Lesson* where the teacher is explicitly portrayed as the bully. She also was open to conversations where students shared their own bullying experiences which sometimes

included adults. Instead, I think her sometimes narrow discussions with students reflected her lack of training or mentorship in opening up spaces where all perspectives are welcome and explored without necessarily being confirmed or denied. In talking with Mrs. Smith we would talk in advance about the direction of the conversation or discussion for a particular lesson. Given those discussions and debriefing discussions afterward, I come to the conclusion that Mrs. Smith had a preconceived “beginning, middle, end” of the discussion and was often more focused on moving from point A to B rather than letting the students direct or infuse their own points in the discussion.

### *Summary*

Mrs. Smith’s middle school students were able to contemplate the complexities of bullying through critical practices by obtaining new information and synthesizing it into their own personal message and anti-bullying action project. Mrs. Smith and I developed curriculum lessons through a critical lens that opened up spaces for Mrs. Smith’s students to discuss the complex sociopolitical issue of bullying. While students struggled with the ramifications of bullying behaviors, students scaffolded the perspectives of others and information as they moved through the curriculum embedded in critical principles and were eventually able to synthesize and infuse that information about negative implications into their social action project. This study addressed missing elements of current bullying and critical literacy research by focusing on infusing student input into anti-bullying strategies, focusing on the creation, implementation, and reflection of a student orchestrated social action project, by implementing critical literacy practices in the middle school setting specifically exploring bullying. This study continued to acknowledge the important role of the teacher in utilizing critical literacy practices and in



addressing bullying. However, the role of teacher was not as explored or explained as fully as I had intended. More on the role of the teacher is addressed in the implications section at the end of this chapter.

### *Research Question 3*

3. To what extent will the combination of critical literacy practices addressing the issue of bullying work as an anti-bully strategy?

### *Assertion*

The combination of critical literacy principles utilized to address bullying was successfully achieved and resulted in raising middle school awareness. It resulted in students taking responsibility to bring about change through action in their environment, making it a viable anti-bully strategy open to further exploration. Critical literacy principles were used to create bullying lessons. Critical literacy lessons provided an avenue for raising awareness about bullying in authentic bottom-up ways. Critical literacy practices provided a pathway for students to initiate action against bullying in their school environment. As a result, Mrs. Smith's students interrogated bullying by disrupting the everyday world, wrestled with understanding bullying through the analysis of power relationships, viewed bullying from multiple perspectives or realities, struggled with analyzing how bullying is portrayed in popular culture and media, and ¾ of the presenting students moved toward social action to combat bullying.

### *Critical Literacy Practices as a Tool to Address Bullying*

As described in detail in Chapters 4 and 5, critical literacy principles were key in bringing conversations about bullying to the surface in Mrs. Smith's seventh grade classroom. Previous anti-bullying strategies adopted at MC Middle School have been

adult created and imposed curriculum or programming with little or no student input. Since critical literacy practices is not a common tool teachers at MC Middle School use and since anti-bullying measures have been top-down in development, MC Middle School was an ideal location with little or no prior influence from either concept (the critical literacy tool or extensive knowledge about bullying) to confound the findings of this dissertation. In essence, the school setting was a clean slate for bullying and critical literacy exploration. Each teacher-directed lesson, as explained in Chapter 4, contained at least three critical literacy principles specifically focusing on issues of power, equity, and justice regarding bullying at school. While the lessons were teacher-directed, the lessons were open to modification depending on student interest and knowledge. Over the course of the study, student investment in the curriculum from the beginning built to the point that students were, indeed, able to take control of their learning and action project.

Critical literacy principles do not seek to extinguish social tensions, but stir the waters to bring about awareness, discourse, and change (Friere, 1972). Therefore, the goal of integrating critical literacy and bullying was not to give solutions nicely packaged, but to allow students the opportunity to wrestle with the complexities of bullying and come to their own understanding and conclusions. In this way, awareness of bullying issues is not raised because adults impose and inundate students with “awareness”. Instead, awareness is raised as students scaffold their personal connections and information is built and created with the help or challenge of others.

Processing power and equity issues manifested in bullying, viewing from multiple perspectives, and analyzing popular culture and media, disrupts the commonplace. Questioning the status quo along with a raised awareness leads students to the door of

social action. A majority of the students in Mrs. Smith's class were quickly able to brainstorm possible social action projects when the opportunity was presented. However, after viewing the film *Paper Clips* which is a documentary about middle school students who collected paper clips in response to learning about the holocaust, four of Mrs. Smith's students thought they were suppose to collect paper clips as their social action project to address bullying. They were not able to transfer the concept of middle schoolers designing a social action project that appropriately connects and addresses a specific topic or issue. Instead, they took the film very literally and voiced their confusion as their peers brainstormed ideas including: rap video, public service announcement, etc. Through the help of peers and additional teacher support during the brainstorming session, these four students gained a clearer picture of social action and eventually two of the four were able to contribute an idea to the brainstorming session that did, indeed, address bullying.

#### *Combining Critical Literacy Common Components and Bullying*

In varying degrees, Mrs. Smith's students were able to address bullying through the combination of critical literacy practices as outlined in Chapter 2's theoretical frameworks. In Chapters 4 and 5 I detailed the data for the combination of each of the components discussed in this section. In this portion, I will briefly review the data, but discuss the degree to which students were impacted by each.

*Interrogating bullying by disrupting the everyday world.* Data discussed in Chapter 4 showed students working through to define bullying beyond the cultural norm. Mrs. Smith's students were provided with opportunities and used those opportunities to

explore blame, negotiate spaces for open critical conversations to occur, and share their personal connections with peers.

While the students and Mrs. Smith struggled in the beginning, that was to be somewhat expected since Mrs. Smith and the students lacked formal experiences with anti-bullying programming and critical literacy practices. The students and Mrs. Smith progressed in the process as they challenged the everyday stereotypes of bullying and the social and cultural norms that surrounded bullying at their school. This component combination was present in the design of all teacher-directed lessons as seen in Chapter 3, Table 1. Overall, this component was one that I think all of the students in Mrs. Smith's class achieved in at least point during data collection. A majority of students were able to connect early on the experience and progressed to the point that they were able to challenge stereotypes and apply rich information into their social action projects. A few students had moments in their writing or discussion or social action projects that interrogated and challenged the everyday conceptions of bullying, but were not consistent or appeared able to challenge the typical social constructs of bullying behaviors and beliefs on a sustained basis. The best example of this is the skit group. Each girl participating in the group displayed individual moments of critical thought either in discussion or writing throughout the teacher-directed lessons. However, when it came time for the group as a whole to combine their efforts and understanding to disrupt bullying in the everyday world through their skit, the skit lacked bullying information and messages.

*Understanding bullying through analyzing power relationships.* In Chapter 4, I discussed how students explored power relationships and power shifts. Again, this

component was imbedded early on in the curriculum design (see Table 1). Again, the students struggled in the beginning with identifying bullying roles and the power relationships manifested in bullying behaviors. Students also wrestled with responses to bullying and actions which shift power in negative and positive ways.

The students and Mrs. Smith took longer in exploring this concept than I had originally imagined. I expected students to have a cache of adult responses that had been given to them that I would need to guide them past in order to have them begin generating their own responses to shift power in bullying relationships. For example, I thought I would get student responses such as “tell a teacher” or “walk away.” These are some of the suggested responses from *Too Good for Violence* that students had worked through at the beginning of the school year. Instead, students had their own suggestions such as inflatable dolls and calling the police, but they lacked dimension in the realities of some of their responses.

The journey in analyzing bullying power relationships was successful with Mrs. Smith’s students overall. However, it was more complicated and required more teacher guidance than I had originally planned. The curriculum required this concept to be explicitly addressed multiple times. At times, this maneuvering of guided instruction became challenging for the teacher in balancing a guided discussion and maintaining open space for student opinion. This was evidenced in the *Just One Flick of a Finger* dialogue where Mrs. Smith was not open to the possibility that the teacher was perceived as a bully by students.

*Viewing bullying from multiple perspectives or realities.* Similar issues about responding to bullying behaviors surfaced when students viewed bullying from multiple

perspectives. Students listened to peers and worked in groups and as a whole class to think about what responses might be useful when dealing with a bully. As stated in Chapter 4, the five critical principles are not isolated. In talking about power relationships and choices, students would have the opportunity to hear other voices, input, and ideas. Mrs. Smith's students were encouraged and did voice their own perspectives. In all the times I observed the students, they were always tolerant and respectful of peer opinions even when their own opinions varied. There were no incidents of adult interventions to mediate tolerance or disrespectful issues during class or small group discussions.

I was encouraged and inspired by the students' support for one another and the level of tolerance and nurturing they displayed for their classmates, especially since they did not appear to connect to the viewpoints expressed by the students in the *Let's Get Real* video. Looking at the data and reflecting on my observations, I think this was the component that occurred most naturally with these students as they opened up and built community in this new context. Even though they were accepting of alternative views, that did not mean that they internalized or agreed with those views. An example of this is the students' challenge of the role of legislation in regulating behaviors.

*Analyzing how bullying is portrayed in popular culture and media.* Mrs. Smith's student responses when asked to analyze how bullying is portrayed in popular culture and media remains a mystery to me. I do not think this was a component that a majority of the students showed evidence of understanding. The *Let's Get Real* response, the confusion about collecting paper clips after viewing the *Paper Clips* documentary about social action, and the strong connection to the *Odd Girl Out* video provided a range of responses that are not easily connected or explained. The only pattern that appeared to

emerge was the lack of interest or connection to documentary films versus the very strong interest and connection to the fiction film. However, the data does not provide me other clues that lead me to a rationale or reasoning beyond that general finding from the students themselves.

In looking at the lessons and the research design, this component was the least explicitly developed in the curriculum. I relied on the medium of film to analyze bullying, but in hindsight, I do not think enough support was given in taking time for students to reflect and evaluate popular culture and media and the messages they convey. It was touched on in several discussions as a part of a bigger picture and the films were used as an instructional tool, but there were no lessons which specifically and explicitly focused on this component. Overall, there was not sufficient evidence that Mrs. Smith's students analyzed bullying in popular culture and media.

*Moving toward social action to combat bullying.* Chapter 5 details the students' decision making process of choosing an audience and a project. It also details the presentation components: powerpoint, skit, rap, and pamphlet. As discussed in Chapter 5, the students were able to design, implement, evaluate, and reflect on the potential impact of their social action project addressing bullying at MCMS. The audience was also able to reflect and evaluate their immediate reactions and responses to Mrs. Smith's students' presentation.

In regards to Mrs. Smith's students, by far I felt this was the strongest combined component. Even with the issues in the skit group's presentation, in looking at the other three groups, the social action project was a synthesis and culmination of all the other components. This was a pivotal piece in this dissertation (as reflected in Research

Question 2). The information students gained and the desire they expressed to raise awareness among their peers was a critical process that sought to inspire change and move their school toward justice in dealing with bullying issues. In regards to the audience, Chapter 5 described a limited amount of data collected in terms of feedback. The initial responses from the audience were promising and positive about the presentation. But the audience also expressed skepticism about the viability of mandating anti-bully behaviors. In regards to the curriculum, elements of social action were present in early lessons and explicitly addressed in the discussions toward the midpoint of the teacher-directed lessons.

### *Summary*

The combination of critical literacy practices to address bullying can be manifested in curriculum where students have a voice and ownership in their learning. As students become invested and gain information they move toward social action and a desire to raise the awareness of others. Integrating and addressing bullying via critical literacy principles allows personal connections, questions, debate, and individual voices to surface. Because the curriculum then develops out of the needs, interests, backgrounds, concerns, etc. of a specific group, the response is personal, specific, and unique to its members. Critical literacy curriculum units can be discussed and designed as a guide, but educators should be cautious is “packaging” critical literacy curriculum and hoping it translates to other schools and other kids. Instead, the combination of critical literacy and bullying should serve as the model for teachers to guide their own students through an exploration of their own bullying beliefs, experiences, and issues within their own



specific school setting and determine action that is meaningful to those students in their context.

### *Limitations*

As discussed in Chapter 3, time was the biggest limitation to this study. It takes time to process information in a critical way. It takes time to develop dialogue and create a sense of safety where students will open up and share personally. It requires teaching strategies that allow for open conversations, discussion, and debate where all opinions are welcomed, challenged, and explored. Since the students in this study had not been exposed to this type of teaching strategy prior to this study, it took a good deal of time for students to open up and not just fish for “the right answer” the teacher is expecting. This also requires time on the teacher’s part to have patience, listen, and learn to facilitate open discussions even if opinions are expressed that are not their own. Mrs. Smith struggled with this at times in the beginning, trying to coerce the students to see things as she did (see Chapter 4). However, over time and through our open dialogue, she became more relaxed and in tune with the goals of the study.

Since data collection for this study was done at the end of the school year, it was not possible to follow Mrs. Smith’s students or the audience participants further into the school year where a change in behaviors or beliefs may have been monitored or further surveyed. Also, as discussed in Chapter 5, extensive time limitations were placed on the Socratic seminar sessions by faculty members and scheduling complications. While I was able to have all of Mrs. Smith’s class present for the debriefing discussion, I was only to have a fraction of the audience members present.

An overarching limitation to these findings is still the potential tendency of legislatures and educators to package and mass produce curriculum to address bullying rather than taking the time to understand their own bullying identity, environment, trends, and understandings in their individual school community. A tough, complex, social issue such as bullying does not appear to be controlled by a sterile, mechanical, step-by-step, impersonal, top-down approach. Time for teacher training in bullying and critical literacy practices, time to collaborate with colleagues and peers, time to dive deep into rich topics for extended periods, and time to develop, implement, and assess the impact of social action projects are all limitations connected back to the finite resource of time. However, given the time, the possible positive implications will hopefully outweigh the additional effort required to create anti-bullying measures through a critical lens.

### *Implications*

The implications stemming from this research are determined within the scope of this case study. The implications I discuss in this section are relative to the students, teachers, administrators, school, and community where the study took place. However, further research and the interpretations of this research's reader may expand implication possibilities.

The need for teacher training in dealing with bullying in the school setting and the need for teacher training in the use of critical literacy principles are important to future studies. Critical literacy practices are not commonplace in the design of school curriculum and there is a tendency to see bullying and critical literacy as “one more thing” that teachers now have to do (Hogan, 2004). Training in infusing critical practices and tough sociopolitical issues into the established school curriculum requires

understanding of the conceptual frameworks and mentors to come alongside teachers, students, and administrators. Case in point: while the state in which this study took place mandated an anti-bullying law for schools, no training schedule, curriculum development, state support, or funding had been passed down to schools although the law had already been in place for one academic year.

Implications for school practices include an increased focus on student input. The classroom should focus on ensuring student involvement and voice in decision making, curriculum, and action in anti-bullying measures within schools. Students were empowered by taking responsibility to create messages they valued and disseminating that message in their presentations. Their actions sought to bring about social justice and change in their school environment regarding bullying issues.

Further research opportunities include long-term change and implications of critical literacy on anti-bullying beliefs in students. Further research on teacher training, varying grade levels, and expanded studies on the integration of critical literacy practices as an anti-bullying tool may be able to give us more information on what short-term and long-term impact this strategy may have. In terms of this time and this study, it is not only the students who changed, but my understanding and perspectives were changed as well. I was inspired watching the students' grapple the complex issue of bullying with their minds, emotions, and actions. I agree with Mrs. Smith's student who said, "I won't think about it the same way again." I know from this time forward, I won't think about it the same way again, either.

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## **Appendix**

### **Daily Lesson Plan Outlines**

**Day 1 Lesson Plan Outline:**

Facilitated by: Mrs. M

April 11, 2006

1. Harris & Petrie's Bullying: The Bullies, the Victims, the Bystanders Survey  
Appendix B: Student and Teacher Surveys to Identify Bullying on Campus  
Student Survey (Rev. 11/02)
2. Write own Definition "What is bullying?"
3. Pair-Share and Teacher Recording Responses to "What is bullying" writing prompt.

**Day 2 Lesson Plan Outline:**

Facilitated by: Mrs. M

April 12, 2006

1. View Let's Get Real Video
2. Minor Discussion Following Viewing

**Day 3 Lesson Plan Outline:**

Facilitated by: Mrs. M

April 17, 2006

1. Vocabulary, Definitions for: Target, Perpetrator, Bystander, Ally
2. Just One Flick of a Finger
  - A. Before book is read, discuss the following terms: perpetrator, target, ally, bystander
  - B. Pass out graphic organizer, tell them to write in characters, details, situations from the story that seem to fit under each category as you read.
  - C. Read Just One Flick of a Finger aloud using color transparencies so all students can see.
  - D. Post Reading Discussion should include:
    1. Impressions of the book
    2. Who had the power in the book?
    3. How did power shift in the book?
    4. Were power shifts in positive or negative directions?

**Day 4 Lesson Plan Outline:**

Facilitated by: Mrs. M

April 18, 2006

1. Revisit and Review Just One Flick of a Finger  
Emphasizing:

1. Impressions of the book
  2. Bullying has POWER relationships
  3. Power shifts through the actions or lack of actions of perpetrators, targets, allies, and bystanders
  4. Were power shifts in positive or negative directions in the books?
2. Types of Bullying
- A. Break students up into 6 groups
  - B. Explain that we will be looking at different types of bullies today, including:
    1. physical
    2. verbal
    3. sexual
    4. technological
    5. relational
    6. reactionary
  - C. Use Power Graphic Organizer to have students record their thoughts (one recorder for each group will suffice)
  - E. Conclusion Discussion of how types of bullies demonstrate power and some possibilities of actions/scenarios which can shift the power from the bully in a positive way.

### **Day 5 Lesson Plan Outline**

Facilitated by: Mrs. M

April 19, 2006

- I. Review what is meant by a Power Relationship
- II. Key Concepts to Discussion based on Day 4 Data Collection
  - A. You can only really control your own behavior—responsibility
  - B. In the choices you make, you may influence others around you (their behavior)
  - C. Levels of Power in trying to make a positive shift:
    1. Yourself
    2. Friends
    3. Parents
    4. Teachers
    5. School Administrators
    6. Police
    7. Law
  - D. What are realistic and appropriate avenues to shift power
- III. Bullying Scenarios
  - A. Imagine yourself in the 6 bullying situations.
  - B. Identify the problem
  - C. Determine the level of seriousness
  - D. Brainstorm ways of solving the problem by listing options based on the severity of the situation

E. Choose the BEST option that is appropriate, realistic, and a positive outcome

### **Day 6 Lesson Plan Outline**

Facilitated by: Mrs. M

April 23, 2006

#### **I. Brainstorm**

A. What type of things (stereotypes) often make people targets for bullies?

B. Answers may include

1. Race
2. Religion
3. SES
4. Gender
5. Special Needs
6. Appearance
7. Abilities or Lack of
8. Sexual Orientation
9. Family Life

#### **II. "The Music Lesson"**

A. Distribute a copy to each student

B. Perpetrator, Ally, Bystander, Victim Graphic Organizer

C. Silently read through "The Music Lesson" making notes

D. Discussion

1. Who is the perpetrator, ally, bystander, victim?
2. Who had the power? Who has it now?
3. What would you have done if you were Mark?
4. What would you have done if you were Sarah?
5. Does this story sound familiar or remind you of something you've seen or experienced?

#### **III. Writing**

A. Write a personal story that reminds you of this text in some way (text to self)

### **Day 7 Lesson Plan Outline**

Facilitated by: Mrs. M and Amber Reed

April 23, 2006

#### **I. Brainstorm**

A. What type of things (stereotypes) often make people targets for bullies?

B. Answers may include

1. Race
2. Religion
3. SES
4. Gender
5. Special Needs
6. Appearance



7. Abilities or Lack of
8. Sexual Orientation
9. Family Life

II. “The Music Lesson”

- A. Distribute a copy to each student
- B. Perpetrator, Ally, Bystander, Victim Graphic Organizer
- C. Silently read through “The Music Lesson” making notes
- D. Discussion
  1. Who is the perpetrator, ally, bystander, victim?
  2. Who had the power? Who has it now?
  3. What would you have done if you were Mark?
  4. What would you have done if you were Sarah?
  5. Does this story sound familiar or remind you of something you’ve seen or experienced?

**Day 8 Lesson Plan Outline**

Facilitated by: Amber Reed

April 24, 2006

I. Reread “The Music Lesson”

II. Writing

- A. Write a personal story that reminds you of this text in some way (text to self)

**Day 9 Lesson Plan Outline**

Facilitated by: Mrs. M and Amber Reed

April 27<sup>th</sup>

I. Odd Girl Out Film

- A. First 40 minutes through the dinner scene from both perspectives
- B. Venn Diagram while watching
  1. Compare and contrast boy versus girl bullying behaviors/perspectives as portrayed in the film.

**Day 10 Lesson Plan Outline**

Facilitated by: Amber Reed

April 28, 2006

I. Guest Speaker

- A. Thirty-one year old male who was bullied in upper elementary school
- B. Interview Style Presentation (see transcripts and question sheet)
- C. Question and Answer follow-up by students

### **Day 11 Lesson Plan Outline**

Facilitated by: Amber Reed

April 29, 2006

#### **I. Forgiveness Poems**

- A. Based on Linda Christensen's Forgiveness Poem concepts
- B. Quick review of poetry
  - 1. stanzas
  - 2. free verse
  - 3. rhyme scheme
  - 4. repetition
- C. Brainstorm "stanza starters" as a class
- D. Student quiet working time to write
- E. Student opportunity to openly share

### **Day 12 Lesson Plan Outline**

Facilitated by: Mrs. M and Amber Reed

May 2, 2006

#### **I. Inside Out Exercise**

- A. Four random students picked to go in hall
- B. Rest of class is clustered talking at random
  - "Inside" class clustered as given the "secret code" (tapping on the head) in order for an "outsider" from the hall to be let into the group
- C. Students participate in exercise approximately 20 minutes
- D. Discussion following
  - 1. Power
  - 2. Strategies
  - 3. Feelings
  - 4. Actions Tried

#### **II. Misfits by James Howe**

- A. Excerpt chapter read aloud
- B. Student Writing
  - 1. One Observation, Connection, Question, Surprise

### **Day 13 Lesson Plan Outline**

Facilitated by: Mrs. M

May 5, 2006

#### **I. Odd Girl Out**

- A. Finish film
- B. Student Writing
  - 1. Observations, Connections, Questions, Surprise

#### **II. Brainstorming Social Action Projects**

- A. Audience
- B. Message
- C. Delivery

**Day 14, 15, 16 Lesson Plan Outline**

Facilitated by: Mrs. M and Amber Reed

May 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 2006

I. Paper Clips Documentary

- 1. Focusing on Social Action and the Power of One

**Day 17-23 Lesson Plan Outline**

Facilitated by: Mrs. M and Amber Reed

May 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 24 2006

I. Social Action Project Planning, Design, and Creation

**Day 24 Lesson Plan Outline**

Facilitated by: Mrs. M's students and Amber Reed

May 25, 2006

I. Social Action Project Implementation

- A. Presentation
- B. Follow-up interview with research class
- C. Follow-up interview with student observers

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## **Teaching**

### **Indiana University Kokomo Courses Taught: Fall 2002-Fall 2007**

#### *E370 Integrated Reading and Language Arts Methods*

Fall 2007, Spring 2007, Fall 2006

#### *E349 Teaching/Learning of Young Children I*

Fall 2006

#### *E352 Teaching/Learning of Young Children II*

Spring 2007

#### *E354 Teaching/Learning of Young Children III*

Fall 2007

#### *X460 Tradebooks in Early Education*

Summer 2007

#### *E335 Introduction to Early Childhood*

Summer 2007

#### *E336 Play as Development*

Spring 2007

#### *M440/M420 Student Teaching Seminar*

Spring 2007, Fall 2006, Spring 2006, Fall 2005, Spring 2005, Fall 2004, Spring 2004

#### *E339 Teaching of Language Arts in the Elementary Classroom*

Spring 2006, Fall 2005, Spring 2005, Fall 2004, Spring 2004, Fall 2003, Spring 2003, Fall 2002

#### *E340 Teaching of Reading in the Elementary Classroom I*

Spring 2006, Fall 2005, Spring 2005, Fall 2004, Spring 2004, Fall 2003, Spring 2003, Fall 2002

#### *E341 Teaching of Reading in the Elementary Classroom II*

Fall 2005, Spring 2005, Fall 2004, Spring 2004, Fall 2003

#### *E506 Advanced Early Childhood Curriculum*

Summer 2007

#### *L559 Tradebooks in the Elementary Classroom*

Summer 2006, Summer 2005

#### *E545 Advanced Teaching of Reading in the Elementary School*

Summer 2006

#### *W505 VISION: Professional Partnerships with Business and Industry*

Summer 2006

#### *X401/X501 Teaching Reading in the Content Area*

Summer 2005, Summer 2003

#### *E535 Advanced Teaching of Language Arts in the Elementary School*

Summer 2004

#### *H340 Education in American Culture*

Fall 2003, Spring 2003, Fall 2002

#### *M480 Student Teaching Supervision*

Spring 2005, Fall 2004, Spring 2004, Spring 2003, Fall 2002

**Service Learning  
Imbedded in Indiana University Courses Taught Fall 2007-Fall 2005**

<i>Kinsey Youth Center Children's Resource &amp; Family Visitation Room</i>	Fall 2007
<i>Walk &amp; Talk Kokomo</i>	2006-2007
<i>Quarter by Quarter Campaign: Domestic Violence Shelter</i>	Fall 2007
<i>Take Back the Night: Campus &amp; Community Education on Domestic Violence</i>	2006-2007
<i>Domestic Violence Prop Boxes</i>	Spring 2007
<i>Child Care Solutions Prop Boxes</i>	Fall/Sum 2006
<i>Operation Iraqi Children</i>	2006-2007
<i>Family Services Association/Domestic Violence Shelter Children's Resource Room</i>	Fall 2006
<i>Young Authors Conference</i>	2006-2007
<i>Open Arms Homeless Shelter After School Family Programming</i>	Spring 2006
<i>Open Arms Homeless Shelter Children's Resource Room</i>	Fall 2005
<i>Storybook Holiday Book Drive collaboration with We Care Charity &amp; EdSac</i>	Fall 2004
<i>Bookbags of Hope: Hurricane Relief Collection for School Supplies</i>	Fall 2005
<i>Student Services Collection for Hurricane Relief Volunteer</i>	Fall 2005
<i>Democracy Project Hurricane Relief Efforts: Children's Books</i>	Fall 2005

## **Scholarship Publications**

Aamidor, S. & Reed, A. (2007) Social Justice: From Awareness to Advocacy. Democracy and Civic Engagement: Implications for Teacher Preparation. American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU)

Aamidor, S. & Reed, A. (2007). Action research as a method for developing a personal concept of teaching student teachers. *Educational Action Research*.

## **Research in Progress**

Reed, Amber. "I won't think about it the same way again": Critical literacy as an anti-bullying agent in the middle school setting.(Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation). Indiana University Bloomington School of Education.

This research uses critical literacy practices to open conversation regarding bullying issues in the middle school setting. Participants explored elements of power and perspective in bullying behaviors and created and implemented a social action project to address bullying at their middle school.

Reed, Amber & Aamidor, Shirley (under editorial review). Making the grade: a journey in designing a quality rubric.

This research created a successful model rubric based on theoretically researched principles of rubric design. This study looks at the process of development through an integration of theoretical frameworks, inter-coder reliability and content validity measures. I drafted the rubric and did the training for the reliability testing. Design of the study, implementation, and data analysis was done in equal collaboration between Dr. Aamidor and myself.

Reed, Amber & Aamidor, Shirley. Implications for Teacher Candidates in a Partnership School (working title)

This study was conducted during the initial year of a partnership school agreement between the university and a public elementary school. This qualitative study includes candidate reflections, instructor observational data, and candidate surveys. The study also included a closer look at teacher candidates who had experienced both traditional and partnership school practica within the same teacher education program.

Reed, Amber. Children's Resource Rooms as a Service Learning Tool and Agent of Change (working title)

This study is in progress and tracks a series of children's resource rooms created through the collaboration of undergraduate teacher candidates, local business affiliations, and faith-based organization. These resource rooms are housed in homeless, domestic violence, and juvenile detention shelters where children live. The study is collecting data on the impact this service learning opportunity has on the teacher candidates, as well as, the impact the rooms have on the organization that houses them.

Reed, Amber. I think we need to talk about it: infusion of critical literacy practices as a middle school anti-bullying agent. (working title)

This study was conducted to join critical literacy practices, mostly researched in the elementary setting, and anti-bullying agents, mostly addressed at the middle school level. The data has been collected and paper has been drafted. Currently I am researching journals for possible submission.

Reed, Amber & Brown, Lindsey. Critical literacy: a student teacher's journey. (working title)

The research follows a student teacher's journey through an action research project where critical literacy practices were introduced into a fourth grade, low reading group classroom. The rough draft has been completed. Revision in literature review and editing in expansive data collected is currently underway. I designed the research and drafted the article. My co-author implemented the research plan in her student teaching placement.

Reed, Amber & Hahn, Justin. Critical literacy: showing how to do good thinks.(working title)

This study was designed to follow a veteran fourth grade teacher as he explored critical literature selections with no prior knowledge. His journey was recorded as insight to the process of introducing critical literacy practices to the average classroom teacher. I designed the research and drafted the article. My co-author implemented the research plan in his classroom. A manuscript is currently being drafted.



## **Conference Presentations**

“I won’t think about it the same way again: Critical literacy as an anti-bullying agent in middle schools”  
Hawaiian International Conference on Education, International Conference, Honolulu, HI  
January 2008 (Accepted)

“Talking to Children about Tough Issues: Exploring Critical Literacy”  
Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children (IAEYC) State Conference, Indianapolis, IN  
March 2007

“Walk & Talk: Engaging Children in the Everyday World”  
Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children (IAEYC) State Conference, Indianapolis, IN  
March 2007

“Action Research: Journey toward Professional Choices”  
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) National Conference, New York, NY  
February 2007

“Making the Grade: Development of a Successful Programmatic Rubric for Teacher Candidates”  
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) National Conference, New York, NY  
February 2007

“Action Research: Transforming Student Teachers into Effective, Reflective Change Agents”  
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) National Conference, Washington, DC  
February 2005

“Action Research: Transforming Student Teachers into Effective, Reflective Change Agents”  
Lilly Education Conference Midwest Regional Conference, Miami, OH  
November 2004

“Critical Literacy and Popular Culture”  
National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) National Conference, Indianapolis, IN  
November 2004

“Best Practices in the Standards Based Classroom”  
Indiana Non-Public Education Conference (INPEC) State Conference, Indianapolis, IN  
October 2004

“Critical Literacy as an Agent to Discuss Homelessness”  
IUK Fall Education Conference: Understanding Poverty in the Classroom. Kokomo, IN  
October 2004

“Critical Literature in the Classroom”  
Indiana Teachers of Writing (ITW) State Conference, Bloomington, IN  
October 2004

“Action Research to Effect Change at the Preservice Level”  
IUPUI Edward C. Moore Symposium. Indianapolis, IN  
March 2004

“Action Research to Effect Change at the Preservice Level: Theory to Practice”  
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) National Conference, Chicago, IL  
February 2004

## Service

### Indiana University Kokomo

Admissions Committee, Member	2004-2007
Nomination Committee, Member	2005-2007
Take Back the Night/Democracy Project Committee, Member	2005-2008
Campus Copying Committee	2005-2007
IU Kokomo/Howard County Director of Early Childhood Center (CAPE Grant)	2005-2007
Calendar Committee, Member	2002-2004
Honorary Degree Committee, Member	2002-2005
Early Childhood Lecturer Search Committee, co-Chair	2007-2008
Tenure Track Mathematics Search Committee, Member	2006-2007
IACTE Award Committee, Member	2004-2007
Math Lecturer Search Committee	2005-2006
Dean Search Committee	2004-2006
Secondary Education Social Studies Search Committee, Member	2002-2006
Student Teaching Seminar Development Committee	2002-2003
NCATE Accreditation Committee	2002-2003
Created IU Kokomo/Sycamore Elementary School Partnership School	Fall 2006-Present
Created Teacher Education Program Methods Orientation and Student Intern Program	2006-2007
Student Teaching Career Packets for Superintendents of Service Area	2004-2007
Communications with Parents Workshop for Education Students	Fall 2004
New Student Teacher Orientation Effective Teaching Project/Seminar Presentation	2003-2005
Reconciling Best Practices with State Academic Standards Workshop	2004-2005
Secondary Reading Methods	
Panel Discussant on Educational Issues for Education Students	Spring 2004
Introduction to Education	
VIP Day Representative for Division of Education	Fall 2003
Readability Workshop for Explorers	Spring 2003
Designed Program and Portfolio Rubric for Division of Education	Spring 2003
Created Student Teaching Host Teacher Evaluation Form Development	Spring 2002

### Indiana P-12 Education

<i>IU Kokomo/Sycamore Elementary School Partnership School</i>	Fall 2005-Present
Creation of formal Partnership School Agreement for selected IU Kokomo classes taught on field site	
<i>Scholastic Book Fair Volunteer</i>	Fall 2005/2006
Sycamore Elementary School, Kokomo Center School Corporation	

<i>Emergent Literacy in Preschool Settings Workshops and Modeled Lessons</i> Homefront Learning Center, Kokomo, IN	Spring 2006
<i>Howard County Young Author's Conference</i> Collaboration with Kokomo Area Reading Council and Howard County School Corporations	2006-Present
<i>Pajamas and Punch Guest Reader</i> Sycamore Elementary School, Kokomo Center School Corporation	Fall 2005
<i>First Grade KEY Reading Remediation Volunteer</i> Sycamore Elementary School, Kokomo Center School Corporation	2005-2006
<i>Emergent Literacy Workshop for Parents of Preschoolers</i> Little School Preschool, Kokomo, IN	Fall 2005
<i>Gifted and Talented Kindergarten Learning Center Volunteer</i> Sycamore Elementary School, Kokomo Center School Corporation	2004-2005
<i>Gifted and Talented Kindergarten Norman Bridwell Author Study Project</i> Sycamore Elementary School, Kokomo Center School Corporation	Fall 2005
<i>Coordinator for Education Method Student Mentors for Elementary Authors</i> Kokomo Center Schools, Michael Jordan Grant Project	Spring 2004
<i>School Curriculum Consultant</i> Sullivan School Corporation, Sullivan, IN	Fall 2003
<i>Writing Rubric Alignment Workshop</i> St. Joan and Patrick Schools, Kokomo, IN	Fall 2003
<i>Student Programs Coordinator Assistant</i> Taylor School Corporation, Kokomo, IN	2001-2002
<i>ISTEP Action Plan Coordinator</i> Taylor School Corporation, Kokomo, IN	2001-2002
<i>Language Arts Textbook Adoption Committee, Chair</i> Taylor School Corporation, Kokomo, IN	2001-2002
<i>Language Arts State Adoption List Textbook Review Team</i> Indiana Department of Education	2001
<i>Practicum Student Host Teacher</i> Taylor School Corporation/Indiana University Kokomo	1996-2000
<i>Reading Textbook Adoption Committee</i> Taylor School Corporation, Kokomo, IN	2000
<b>Community</b>	
<i>Creator of Service Learning Children's Resource and Learning Center</i> Howard County Family Services Association, Domestic Violence Shelter	Fall 2006

<i>Operation Iraqi Children Service Learning Project</i> Project supplying Iraqi children with school supplies via United States soldiers	2005-2006
<i>Take Back the Night/Family Services Angel Walk and Awareness Night</i> Collaboration with Howard County Family Services Association, Domestic Violence Shelter	Spring 2006
<i>Walk &amp; Talk Kokomo Day Service Learning Project</i> Early literacy focus partnering 70 teacher candidates, 35 local business, and parents	Fall 2006
<i>Sign Language Interpreting</i> Crossroads Community Church, Kokomo, IN	Fall 2005-Present
<i>Creator of Service Learning Children's Resource and Learning Center</i> Open Arms Women and Children's Homeless Shelter, Kokomo Rescue Mission	Fall 2005
<i>Bookbags of Hope: Hurricane Relief Collection for School Supplies</i> First Presbyterian Little School, Kokomo, IN	Fall 2005
<i>Student Services Collection for Hurricane Relief Volunteer</i> Indiana University Kokomo	Fall 2005
<i>Democracy Project Hurricane Relief Efforts: Children's Books</i> Indiana University Kokomo	Fall 2005
<i>Interviewee for Beatrix Potter Newspaper Article</i> Kokomo Tribune	Spring 2004
<i>Emergent Literacy Workshop for Single Mothers</i> Crossroads Community Single Mothers Support Group, Kokomo, IN	Spring 2004
<i>Child Discipline Workshop</i> Crossroads Community, Kokomo, IN	Spring 2004
<i>Distributed MLA Research Guides</i> Friends Theological College, Kenya, Africa	Spring 2004
<i>Educational Programs Consultant</i> Nesting Doves Home for Teen Mothers, Kokomo, IN	Spring 2004
<i>Women's Conference Motivational Speaker</i> Epworth Forest, Lake Webster, IN	Spring 2004
<i>Language Rich Environment Consultant</i> YMCA Childcare, Kokomo, IN	Spring 2003
<i>Kids Construction Zone Community Instructor</i> Bona Vista Programs, Kokomo, IN	Spring 2003
<b>Professional Societies/Organizations Membership</b>	
National Council of Teachers of English	
International Reading Association	
Pi Lambda Theta	
Kokomo Area Reading Council	





